

JEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

SUFFERING IN THE LIGHT OF THE SCRIPTURES

**SUFFERING ACCORDING TO THE TRADITIONS OF
EGYPT AND MESOPOTAMIA**

Aloysius D'Souza

**THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING:
THE TRADITION OF THE PSALMISTS AND SAGES**

K. Luke

**THE WORLD-WIDE MISSION OF GOD'S
HUMBLE SERVANT**

J. N. M. Wijngaards

SUFFERING IN THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS

Mathew Vellanickal

SUFFERING ACCORDING TO THE BUDDHA'S TEACHING

K. Luke

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The Word of God

SUFFERING

IN THE LIGHT OF THE SCRIPTURES

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Editorial

Suffering is an integral part of human experience here on earth, and however much we may try, we shall never be able to escape from its iron grip. We fret and fume, feel despondent and desperate, and perhaps even curse and swear! Well, all this is weak, mortal man's reaction to the fact of suffering.

The sacred writings of the great religions have dwelt upon the problem of pain, and in the present issue of *Jeevadhara* an endeavour is made to offer the public a succinct account of the teachings of the scriptures regarding suffering. Quite naturally our attention is concentrated on the Bible and three contributors have investigated some aspects of the views of the two Testaments on the meaning and significance of suffering. K. Luke surveys the 'Wisdom' literature of the Old Testament with special emphasis on the Psalms, those touching poems which portray most faithfully the pious Israelite's reactions when he is caught in the meshes of suffering. The greatest sufferer in the Old Testament is the Servant of Yahweh, and Deutero-Isaiah sketches the figure of this mysterious being in the fourth servant song. J. N. M. Wijn-gaards has chosen Is 42: 1-4 for discussion.

The New Testament gives the genuine solution to the problem of pain: the cross of Jesus is the supreme answer to the question raised by the fact of suffering, and Mathew Vellanickal expounds in detail our Lord's teaching regarding suffering and the role suffering had in the accomplishment of His mission. The first article by Aloysius D'Souza is intended to furnish the necessary background for a better understanding of the studies in the Old Testament: the Egyptians, the Sumerians and the Accadians were keenly aware of the problem created by the experience of pain here on earth, and their literary records (which may be put on a par with the sacred writings of other world

religions) tell us how they reacted in moments of distress. The last article dwells briefly upon the tradition of India as represented by the greatest of Indians, namely, Gautama Buddha.

We are aware that we have not been able to do adequate justice to the topic chosen for the current issue. Limitations of space and time do not allow us to discuss several aspects of the biblical teaching regarding suffering. Moreover we have not been able to include studies on the views of Zarathustra, of the Mahavira, of the great thinkers of Hinduism, and finally of Mohammed. In spite of the limitations, it is hoped, the contributions will help the reader to reflect in depth on the mystery of suffering.

Calvary
Trichur-680 004

K. Luke

Suffering according to the Traditions of Egypt and Mesopotamia

Suffering has ever been part of human experience here on earth, and though men of all times and cultures have grappled with this problem, it has consistently eluded any satisfactory solution. In this study the traditions of Egypt and Mesopotamia bearing on the subject of suffering will be examined. The literature at our disposal is vast and complex, and it is impossible to survey it all within the limits of the present investigation. Our enquiry will therefore be restricted to those compositions which can be classified as wisdom literature.¹ An attempt will be made to understand what the Egyptians and Mesopotamians thought about the fact of suffering, and what exactly is the nature of the solutions they had to offer to this vexing problem.

The present study is divided into two parts: the first is devoted to the survey of the traditions of ancient Egypt, the second to the material furnished by the Sumerians and Accadians, the two principal ethnic groups of ancient Mesopotamia.

I

During the period of the Old Kingdom² Egypt reached the zenith of political power and material civilization. Freedom

1. Hence such types as laments over the destruction of cities, prayers and supplications of the sick, etc. will be excluded from the present survey.
2. Modern scholars divide the history of Egypt into four periods: the Old Kingdom (2650-2190), the Middle Kingdom (2160-1580), the New Kingdom (1580-1090) and the Recent Era (1085-332); the date given here for the first period represent the so-called low chronology in contradistinction to the high chronology which accepts 2778 as the *terminus a quo*. Vide the latest discussion on chronology in W. C. Hayes, "Chronology. I. Egypt- To End of the Twentieth Dynasty, *The Cambridge Ancient History* I / 1 (2nd ed., Cambridge 1970), pp. 173-93.

from external threat and the absence of internal conflicts characterized the course of her history. The people lived in security and peace and enjoyed material prosperity. The central authority of the king gave stability to the state and ensured its maintenance. The king was considered divine. He was a great god, son of the sun god Re. He played a key role in the political, social and economic functioning of the state. In such a theocentric state man could dispense with the support of the powers on high and abstract ethical standards. A good and successful life consisted in the possession of wealth and in the favour of the god-king. Religion, magic and the principle of *ma'at*³ were not absent from the thought and life of the Egyptians, but the directing forces of their conduct were success and wealth. The pious Egyptian even believed that it was an order established by the gods and that it was valid for all time.⁴

But this state of affairs did not last long; the end came sooner than expected. The forces of disruption were already at work during the long and weak reign of Pepi II⁵, and after his death the Old Kingdom disintegrated. It is the next period, called the First Interim Period, that is of interest to us.⁶ The

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3. This is a central idea in Egyptian religion and thought. It is not an ethical concept but an *Ordnungsprinzip* (W. Helck-E. Otto, *Kleines Wörterbuch der Aegyptologie* - [Wiesbaden, 1956], p. 210), and has several meanings, as "accuracy, justice, truth, order," etc.; its antonyms are disorder and lie. Detailed discussion is found in S. Morenz, *Aegyptische Religion* (Die Religionen der Menschheit 8, Stuttgart, 1960), pp. 120-33. A. Volten, "Der Begriff der Maat in den ägyptischen Weisheitstexten," *Les sagesses du proche-orient ancien* (Paris, 1963, pp. 73-99.
 4. J. A. Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt* (Phoenix Books, Chicago, 1956), p. 104.
 5. Wilson, *ibid.*, p. 105. Pepi II reigned for an incredibly long period of ninety-four years! And there is some justification for this tradition.
 6. This period commences with the end of the Old Kingdom and comes to a close with the emergence of the Middle Kingdom; for discussions, cf. E. Drioton-J. Vandier, *L'Égypte* ('Clio,' Introduction aux études historiques - Les peuples de l'orient méditerranéen II, 4th ed., Paris, 1962), pp. 205-38. Cf. too Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-24.

old and much cherished values can be replaced by new and uncertain ones. Notwithstanding the great political turmoil, restlessness and breakdown of authority in the land, this age also saw the development of a great deal of literature, dealing with the bewilderment and despair that filled the Egyptians as they witnessed the sudden and violent overthrow of their state and the end of their sense of security. Some of the important works of this period are⁷: *Lament of Ipuwer*⁸, *Instruction for King Merikare*⁹, *Lament of the Eloquent*¹⁰, and *Argument between a Man Weary of Life and his Soul*.¹¹ All these compositions give expression to the shock and grief the Egyptians experienced at the sad state of things. The old values had disappeared and the new ones had not yet emerged on which they could pin their hopes. Life itself seemed to have become heavy and unbearable, and not a few thought of ending it by suicide, or of forgetting it by *complete abandonment* to bodily pleasures. At the same time some expressed their yearning for the return of good rule.

The prevailing disorder and confusion brought about a feeling of profound despair and deep pessimism. The old standards of industry and of the favour of the king for a good and successful life came to be replaced by violence, extortion and robbery. Theft was so widespread that not only were public treasuries plundered but even the graves and pyramids were raided and the stones carried off by people to build their own tombs! There was too a general contempt for law and order, and the rights of private property were not respected. Ipuwer portrays very well the discouraging mood prevalent around him: "Why really, the land spins around as does a potter's wheel. The robber is (now) the possessor of riches... Why really, all

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7. Cf. C. Schedl, *History of the Old Testament* I (New York, 1973), p. 23.
 8. Translation in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (abbr. *ANET*, 2nd ed., Princeton, 1956), pp. 441-44.
 9. *ANET*, pp. 414-18. A. Erman, *The Ancient Egyptians, A Sourcebook of their Writings* (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1966), pp. 75-84.
 10. *ANET*, pp. 407-10. Erman, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-31.
 11. *ANET*, pp. 405-7. Erman, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-92. This work is also known as the 'Dispute on Suicide'.

maid-servants make free with their tongues. When their mistresses speak, it is burdensome to the servants... Why really, the ways (are not) guarded roads. Men sit in the bushes until the benighted (traveller) comes, to take away his burden and steal what is upon him. He is attacked with blows of a stick and slain wrongfully... Ah, would that it were the end of man, no conception, no birth!"¹²

It is interesting to note how the Egyptians reacted to the changed situation of their society. A life based on the pursuit of wealth and success had run itself out when such values were no longer respected. Dissatisfied and disgusted they had recourse to suicide in large numbers. The traditional and much coveted practice of ceremonial burial was abandoned, with many preferring the open river to a plundered tomb. "Why really, many dead are buried in the river. The stream is the tomb and the embalming place has really become the stream... Why really, the crocodiles (sink) down because of what they have carried off, for men go to them of their own accord."¹³

This widespread practice is dramatically expressed in the dispute of the man tired of life which, in the judgment of Wilson, is "one of the finest documents of Egyptian literature."¹⁴ The speaker, filled with pessimism and scepticism, decides to end his life by throwing himself into the fire. But before proceeding with his resolve he consults his *ba*¹⁵, or soul, on the propriety of his intended course of action and also to assure himself whether the soul could offer him persuasive arguments for a good life in spite of the prevailing gloom and melancholy. The soul has no satisfactory answer either. Initially it agrees to be a party to the man's action but subsequently it refuses on the ground that it would deprive him of a decent burial and of the

12. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

13. Wilson, *ibid.*, p. 109.

14. Wilson *ibid.*, p. 111.

15. Here we have a bit of ancient Egyptian psychology. In the Egyptian language, in addition to *ba*, there are two more words, viz. *ka* and *ach* to designate the soul, but no single word corresponds to our idea of soul. Cf. Helck-Otto, *op. cit.*, pp. 165, 326f.

services offered to the dead. It then tries to persuade him to forget his cares and anxieties in the pursuit of sensual pleasures. The man, however, points out the evil consequences of this hedonism which would tarnish his good name and bring shame upon him. Death itself was a greater pleasure because it brought release from the miseries of life and gave a share in the privileges of the dead.

The book has preserved four beautiful poems.¹⁶ The first describes the shame that would stick to the speaker if he gave himself up to sensual enjoyment :

“Behold, my name will reek through thee
More than the stench of fishermen,
More than the stagnant swamps they have fished.

Behold, my name will reek through thee
More than the stench of bird-droppings,
On summer days when the sky is hot.”

In the second poem he laments the breakdown and even the loss of moral and ethical standards :

“To whom can I speak today ?
(One’s) fellows are evil:
The friends of today do not love.

(To whom can I speak today ?)
The gentle man has perished,
But the violent man has access to everybody.

To whom can I speak today?
No one remembers (the lessons of) the past;
No one at this time does (good) for the sake of (doing) ?

In this desperate state death is seen as a release. This is described in the third poem :

“Death (stands) before me today
(Like) the recovery of a sick man,
Like going out-doors (again) after being confined.

16. Extracts from Wilson *Before Philosophy* (Pelican Books), Baltimore, 1966), pp. 113f.

Death (stands) before me today
 Like the fragrance of myrrh,
 Like sitting in the shade on a breezy day.
 Death (stands) before me today
 As a man longs to see his house,
 After he has spent many years held in captivity."

Once dead, one is not only freed from the evils besetting him but is able to oppose and punish the evil-doer, a privilege which the dead share with the gods. Hence he yearns for this privilege:

"Nay, but he who is yonder
 Shall be a living god,
 Inflicting punishment upon the doer of evil.
 Nay, but he who is yonder
 Shall be a man of wisdom,
 Not stopped from appealing to Re when he speaks."

At this juncture the soul assumes the role of the cynic and endeavours to drive home to this ardent pursuer of righteousness the futility of taking life seriously. Life holds out many possibilities of enjoyment and the so-called privileges of the dead could very well be pious conjectures. There is no guarantee that the man will attain them. A 'pigeon' in the hand is worth two in the bush. "Pursue a holiday (mood) and forget care," it advises him. "The old standards of propriety have broken down; we have no certainty about future happiness, so let us grasp what happiness we can in this world. The past shows only that this life is brief and transitory - a transition to an unknowable future."¹⁷

No better is the quest after knowledge and wisdom: "I have heard the words of (the past sages) Imhotef and Hardedef, with whose sayings men speak so much, (but) what are their places (now)? Their walls are crumbled, their places are non-existent, as if they had never been."¹⁸

17. Wilson, *ibid.*, p. 114.

18. Imhotef was the architect who supervised the building of the step-pyramid of King Djoser (around 2650 according to the low chronology) in Saqqara; and who later on came to be deified. He was also considered a sage though he left no writings. Hardedef too was a sage created by popular tradition.

From such cynicism the transition to agnosticism was an easy one. No one knows for certain the fate of his ancestors: "There is no one who comes back from (over) there, that he may tell their state, that he may tell their needs, that he may still our hearts, until we (too) travel to the place where they have gone."¹⁹

In the face of these uncertainties and conjectures, the soul strongly urges the man to settle down to an easy-going and comfortable way of life and snatch opportunities of pleasure: "Make holiday and weary not therein! Behold, it is not given to man to take his property with him. Behold, no one who goes (over there) can come back again."²⁰ Reflection on the problem of suffering has thus led the speaker from despair and cynicism to agnosticism and hedonism.

The sufferings which assailed the Egyptians were, for the most part, of the social and moral order. Still they deserve to be called sufferings as they rendered life in accordance with traditional norms difficult and at times even impossible. The despair and pessimism, the cynicism and agnosticism which characterize their reactions are the natural consequences of a life that had no other aim than the pursuit of wealth and fame. Man needs a stronger base than this to be able to meet the challenges of life which does not always run in a smooth and even course. Lacking this spiritual vision and perspective, the men of the time failed to offer a satisfactory solution to the ills of life to which they were exposed. However, this dark picture is not without its brighter side, even though it was only the faint glimmer of a distant light: Egypt was groping towards the discovery of genuinely spiritual values to replace the old, obsolete, materialistic ones. But that is a different story altogether.

II

Mesopotamia has been the meeting-place of many civilizations, and of the different peoples who contributed to the evolution of culture there. Only the Sumerians and Accadians claim

19. Wilson, *Before Philosophy*, p. 115.

20. Wilson, *ibid.*

our attention for the present. The Sumerians²¹ were the earliest inhabitants of southern Babylonia (in what is now southern Iraq). Their early origins are shrouded in obscurity, and their language, Sumerian, now considerably known, deciphered and interpreted, still presents many hurdles to scholars. They were probably the inventors of the art of writing²², and though Sumerian ceased to be a spoken language already in the course of the second millennium when it was supplanted by Accadian, it came to be held in the highest esteem by the people of Mesopotamia. The tablets unearthed by excavators have brought to light many literary compositions representing such different *genres* as wisdom, religious poetry, mythology, and so on.

The Accadians²³, originally dwelling in the city of Accad in northern Babylonia, moved to the south and founded the united kingdom of Sumer and Accad under the energetic and mighty king Sargon (circa 2350 – 2295 B. C.) who defeated the Sumerian ruler Lugalzagesi. The Accadians borrowed the cuneiform script and used it to write their own language which was destined to remain the *lingua franca* of Mesopotamia from around 2000 to 500 B. C. It has survived in two dialects, viz. Babylonian and Assyrian, with an extensive literature that will help us to know a great deal about the OT world and the Hebrews.

Sumerian literature furnishes us with a poetical essay of 139 lines on the idea of suffering. Samuel N. Kramer has been able to reconstruct it from six clay tablets and fragments excavated at Nippur.²⁴ The poem is an account of human suffering

21. For the history of the Sumerians, their culture and literature, cf. S. N. Kramer, *The Sumerians, Their History, Culture and Character* (Phoenix Books, Chicago, 1970), passim. Cf. too H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness that was Babylon* (Mentor Books, New York, 1968), pp. 27ff.
22. There are scholars who argue that they borrowed the script from their predecessors in the land.
23. For the history of the Accadians, cf. Saggs, *op. cit.*, pp. 76ff.
24. Cf. his study, "'Man and his God.' A Sumerian Version of the 'Job' Motif," *SVT* 3 (1955) pp. 170–82; *History Begins at Sumer* (Doubleday Anchor Books, New York, 1959), pp. 114–18; *ANET Supplement* (Princeton, 1970), pp. 589–91.

and submission and is generally known as the "Sumerian Job." Even though it falls short of the Biblical book of Job in scope, depth of understanding, and beauty of expression, it is a standing monument to the Sumerian genius.

The essay has as its theme patience and forbearance in time of suffering and adversity. Even when it is not merited and the sufferer is fully innocent of any crime, he should not give in to feelings of impatience but persevere in praising his personal god. The 'personal god' mentioned here seems to be the deity worshipped by the sufferer, and it is he who is expected to take up the suppliant's cause in the assembly of the gods.

The essay also makes a copious use of imagery. It does not heap up philosophical and theological arguments to explain the problem of suffering but presents the concrete case of a wealthy, wise and righteous man who is suddenly overtaken by misfortune, and is stricken with sickness. Under the stress of this crushing burden the man maintains his usual calm and gentle disposition. Instead of blaming or cursing his personal god, he humbly has recourse to him with many tears until the god finally deigns to hear his prayer.

The poem comes to a happy conclusion. The god hears his cry and comes to his rescue. His laments and wailings touch the heart of the godhead, and the help from on high comes as speedily as the demon of sickness had vent its fury upon him. The god turns the man's sufferings into joy. Everything is bright and shining once again.

To give the reader some idea of the work here are some extracts from Kramer's translation.²⁵ The man complains of his sufferings:

"You have doled out to me suffering ever anew,
I entered the house, heavy is the spirit,
I, the man, went out to the streets, oppressed is the heart,
With me, the valiant, my righteous shepherd has become
angry, has looked upon me inimically.

25. *History*, pp. 116-18.

My herdsman has sought out evil forces against me who
am not his enemy,
My companion says not a true word to me,
My friend gives the lie to my righteous word,
The man of deceit has conspired against me."

The sufferer now goes on to make an appeal to his god:

"My god (I would stand) before you.
Would speak to you...my word is a groan,
I would tell you about it, would bemoan the bitterness of
my path.

(Would bewail) the confusion of...

My god, the day shines bright over the land, for me the
day is black.

The bright day, the good day has... like the...

Tears, lament, anguish and depression are lodged within me,
Suffering overwhelms me the chosen one for nothing but
tears.

Evil fate holds me in its hand, carries off my breath of life.
Malignant sickness bathes my body...

My god, you who are my father who begot me, lift up
my face.

Like an innocent cow, in pity... the groan.

How long will you neglect me, leave me unprotected?

Like an ox,...

How long will you leave me unguided?"

The god comes to his rescue:

"The righteous words, the pure words uttered by him, his
god accepted.

The words which the man prayerfully confessed,

Pleased the... flesh of his god, and his god withdrew his
hand from the evil word,
... which oppressed the heart... he embraces."

The description of the sufferer's recovery is quite touching:

The encompassing sickness demon, which had spread wide its wings, he swept away.

The (disease) which had smitten him like a ... , he dissipated.

The evil fate which had been decreed for him in accordance
[with his sentence, he turned aside,

He turned the man's suffering into joy,
 Set by him the kindly genii as a watch and guardian,
 Gave him...angels with gracious mein."

The poem does not solve the problem of suffering. It is content with inculcating the right attitude the sufferer should adopt when he is beset with misfortune. Trust and humble prayer are the two means of obtaining deliverance.

An extreme form of suffering is death. The early Sumerians regarded it as an evil and as the supreme divine punishment. In the new concept of the state that was gradually emerging, in which individual rights were greatly emphasized, where justice was no longer a favour but a right, a feeling of resentment against death was natural. What they questioned was not so much the fact of death as the necessity of the just man's being subject to it. Could the death of a good man be justified on any grounds? This problem is treated at length in the epic of Gilgamesh.²⁶

This long and artistically constructed epic makes interesting reading. Gilgamesh, the youthful ruler of Uruk²⁷ has turned a dictator and the people complain to the gods. Enkidu, a savage man, is given by the gods as a companion to Gilgamesh with the purpose of diverting his energies. Together they launch into many dangerous adventures. First they kill Huwawa the monster guarding the cedar forest of the god Enlil. The goddess Inanna, as she heard of this deed, falls in love with Gilgamesh but he turns her away. Humiliated by this insult she sends the bull of heaven to destroy him, but Gilgamesh with the aid of Enkidu succeeds in slaying the bull. There seems to be no end to their bravery. The goddess becomes apprehensive, and finally Enlil decides that Enkidu should die as a penalty for killing Huwawa. The inevitable happens and Gilgamesh is left alone. Many questions crowd upon his mind. He had accepted the fact of death as something normal and unavoidable. He had even encouraged the hesitating

26. Translations in *ANET*. pp. 46-52. There is also an elaborate Accadian epic of Gilgamesh; cf. *ANET*, pp. 72-99 (cf. too *ANETSup*, pp. 503-7).

27. In the Bible Erech (Gen. 10:10. Ezr. 4:9). At present the place is called Warka.

Enkidu in the contest against Huwawa. He had then reckoned with the possibility of his own death and had shown himself ready to meet it in the hope of establishing good fame. He had told his friend:²⁸

“Who, my friend, was ever so exalted (that he could) rise
up to heaven and lastingly dwell with Shamash?
Mere man – his days are numbered,
Whatever he may do, he is but wind.
You are – already now – afraid of death.
Where is the fine strength of your courage?
Let me lead,
and you (tarrying) can call out to me: ‘Close in, fear not’
And if I fall, I shall have found fame.
‘Gilgamesh fell (they will say) in combat with terrible
Huwawa.’”

This knowledge was theoretical and death itself only a common reality. But now it stands before him in all its starkness and touches the core of his personality. What has befallen his friend could happen to him sooner or later. His friend owes his death apparently to no other reason than to Enlil's envy and jealousy. The injustice of death in this manner begins to haunt him and he falls to lamentation as he recalls their adventures. He cannot accept the reality of this kind of death, and he hopes that his friend may come back to life:

“Enkidu, my friend, my younger brother,...
Now – what sleep is this that seized you?
You have grown dark and cannot hear me.”

When Enkidu did not open his eyes, Gilgamesh

“Touched his heart, it was not beating.
Then he covered his friend, as if he were a bride...
Again and again he turned towards his friend,
tearing his (own) hair and scattering the tufts,
stripping and flinging down the finery of his body.”

For seven days and seven nights Gilgamesh wept over him in the hope that he might rise up at his loud cries, but in the end a maggot dropped from Enkidu's nose, and Gilgamesh became disconsolate:

28. Translations from T. Jacobsen, *Before Philosophy*, pp. 224–27.

"Since he is gone, I can no comfort find,
keep roaming like a hunter in the plains."

The reaction to the tragedy that befell his friend arouses in Gilgamesh a strong aversion to death and he decides to do everything in his power to escape it by seeking for everlasting power. He goes to Utnapishtim his ancestor who obtained eternal life and lived a secluded life at the farthest extremity of the world beyond the water of death. People had tried to dissuade him:

"Gilgamesh, whither are you wandering?
Life, which you look for, you will never find.
For when the gods created man, they let
death be his snare, and life
withheld in their own hands.
Gilgamesh, fill your belly—
day and night make merry,
let days be full of joy,
dance and make music day and night.
And wear fresh clothes,
and wash your head and bathe.
Look at the child that is holding your hand,
and let your wife delight in your embrace.
These things alone are the concern of men."

Gilgamesh refuses to comply with this advice, and, after an arduous and tiring journey, reaches the abode of Utnapishtim. This 'Noah' tells him that the life he enjoys is a personal gift and that he owes it to a unique experience which cannot be repeated. The god Enlil had granted him immortality as a reward for saving life here on earth during the great flood. Utnapishtim goes on to ask Gilgamesh to fight a special kind of sleep which is another form of death: He is on the point of perishing when Utnapishtim's wife wakes him up, but his attempt has now ended in failure. Disappointed and frustrated he has to return to Uruk.

However, he is given a parting gift at the kind suggestion of Utnapishtim's wife. He is told about a plant which grows at the bottom of the sea and which is capable of rejuvenating the one who eats it. Encouraged and sustained by this hope, he sets out with Urshanabi, the boat-man of Utnapishtim, succeeds

in plucking the plant, and retraces his steps to Uruk. Tired by the journey across the desert under the hot sun and catching sight of a pool he plunges into it to bathe, leaving the plant on the shore. A snake gets its smell, thrusts out its head and snatches it away! The poet describes the reaction of Gilgamesh:

Gilgamesh sat down and wept,
tears streaming down his cheeks.

'For whose sake, Urshanabi, have I strained my muscles?
For whose sake has my heart's blood been spent?

I brought no blessing on myself -

I did the serpent underground good service'.

Thus the endeavour ends in failure, and the epic tries to prove beyond doubt that death is inevitable and every attempt to place oneself beyond its reach is bound to end in disaster. The poem has no solution to the problem of unjust death. "The epic of Gilgamesh does not come to an harmonious end; the emotions which rage in it are not assuaged; nor there, as in tragedy, any sense of catharsis, any fundamental acceptance of the inevitable. It is a jeering, unhappy, unsatisfying ending. An inner turmoil is left to rage on, a vital question finds no answer"²⁹. The Sumerians, then, have not been able to clarify, much less solve, the knotty problem of suffering. What about the Accadians?³⁰

The poetical composition commencing with the words *Ludlul bêlnêmeqi*, "I will praise the Lord of Wisdom," is a striking parallel to the Sumerian poem of the righteous sufferer. It is occasionally called the Babylonian Job.³¹ The general belief is that the poem originated in Sumerian thought though it received

29. Jacobsen, *ibid.*, p. 227.

30. There is a monograph that makes a comparative study of the idea of suffering in Babylon and Israel: J. J. Stamm, *Das Leiden des Unschuldigen in Babylon und Israel*: (Zurich, 1946). Cf. too A. Kuschke, "Altbabylonische Texte zum Thema 'Der leidende Gerechte'", *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 81 (1956) cols. 69-76.

31. Vide the original text in transcription, with translation and philological commentary in W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 21-62. *ANET*, pp. 434-37; *Supplement*, pp. 596-600.

fuller treatment only in Accadian literature. It is a monologue of 500 lines which describes the fate of a Babylonian nobleman stricken with misfortune and sickness. He is, all of a sudden, forsaken by the gods, forfeits the favour of the king, becomes an enemy of the court and an object of a plot against his life, and is disowned by his friends. Has his good life been of any worth and value?³²

The sufferer describing his life of piety and devotion, says:

"I only heeded prayer and supplication,
my very thought was supplication, sacrifice habitual to me.
Adoration of the king was joy to me,
music for him a source of pleasure.
And I instructed my estate to observe the ritual of the gods,
I taught my people to revere the name of the goddess.
Would that I knew those things that are pleasing to a god!"

His righteousness is repaid with a terrible scourge which makes him lament and complain that the gods have abandoned him:

"*Alu*-disease covers my body like a garment;
sleep in a net enmeshes me;
my eyes stare but see not,
my ears are open, but hear not,
weakness has seized my body.

The lash laid upon me holds terror;
I have been goaded, piercing is the sting.
All day a persecutor chases me,
at night he gives me no respite at all.

No god came to my aid or grasped my hand,
my goddess did not pity me or succour me."

His sad plight is a source of joy to his enemies. They already take him for a dead person and rejoice over his end. The man feels himself greatly wronged and unjustly treated. All his righteous deeds are forgotten and he endures the penalties of the wicked. The good and the bad are equally treated by the gods. Is there any answer to this flagrant violation of the norms of justice?

32. Translations from Jacobsen *op. cit.*, pp. 229-30.

The poem offers a two-fold answer: one to the mind which grapples with this very acute problem and the other to the heart which has become embittered by the unjust dealings of the gods. The mind must accept the fact that human standards cannot be applied to the way in which the gods evaluate human actions. A good and successful life cannot be purchased by such things as righteousness and ritual piety. Human judgment cannot be set up as a standard according to which the gods should act in rewarding man, and the human mind, being limited, cannot fathom the depths of the divine mind and know the reasons and motives behind the actions of the gods. What man esteems as good and praiseworthy may fail to meet with the approval of the gods:

“What seems praiseworthy to one’s self, is but contemptible
before the god(s),
What to one’s heart seems bad, is good before one’s god.
Who may comprehend the mind of the gods in heaven’s
depth?
The thoughts of a god are like deep water; who could
fathom them?
How could mankind, beclouded, comprehend the ways of
god?”

But this sort of reasoning, though it might convince the mind, does not suffice to cool the turbulent heart. To the heart are recommended hope and trust. The gods do not and cannot allow the righteous to go on suffering endlessly. They will rescue the pious in their own time.

The hero of our poem has three dreams. In the first a handsome young man appears to him. But we do not know what his mission was, because the text containing his message is broken. In a second dream he sees another young man who is an exorcist performing some rites on him. Finally there appears to him a woman who promises to heal him. She is followed by a bearded priest who brings a tablet containing a message from Marduk. It gives him health, dignity, prosperity and happiness. There is a complete restoration. The devils who vented their fury upon him are sent back to the underworld and the man proceeds to the temple of Marduk to sing the praises of the god.

Another piece of literature which gives us an insight into the Accadian idea of moral retribution is known as the Babylonian Theodicy.³³ It is a long dialogue between the sufferer and his friend, consisting of twenty-seven stanzas of eleven lines each. Here again the subject of discussion is suffering. The conclusion arrived at after this lengthy exchange of views is that human standards of judgment do not apply to the gods. At one point the friend observes: "We do not understand the ways of the gods; it is blasphemy to dispute the decisions of the gods." Once again the problem of suffering remains a dilemma, and moral retribution is presented as something that goes counter to our ordinary experience of the realities of life!³⁴

Sufferer: I was a posthumous child and my mother died in childbed, leaving me an orphan.

Friend: Death is the lot of all people.

Suf: I am in bad health physically, miserable and not well off.

Fr. The gods finally reward the righteous.

Suf. There are cases of people prospering without piety; I have been pious without prosperity.

Fr. We do not understand the ways of the gods. The impious who prosper temporarily will finally get their deserts.

Suf. According to my observation this has not been the case.

Fr. It is blasphemy to dispute the decisions of the gods.

Here again the enquiring mind is left to grope in the dark. It has to content itself with the fact that the decisions of the gods are inscrutable and that to question them amounts to a lack of reverence.

Literature of the above-mentioned type was only symptomatic of a deeper and more subtle malady which was gradually affecting the spiritual and moral life of the people. The seemingly inexplicable ways of the gods began to fill them with a sense of doubt and indifference towards the possibility and even the very need

33. Cf. Lambert, *op. cit.*, pp. 63 - 91. *ANET*, pp. 438 - 40; *Supplement*, pp. 601 - 4. One of the most basic studies of the poem is by the greatest Assyriologist of modern times B. Landsberger, "Die babylonische Theodizee," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 43 (1936) pp. 32 - 76.

34. Saggs, *op. cit.*, p. 415.

of a good life. If moral retribution is a matter of the caprice of the gods, it is immaterial whether one lives a good or a bad life, or whether one lives at all! Life itself had become heavy and unbearable. Such a spirit of pessimism and gloom comes to expression in the literature of the first millennium B.C. and is reflected in a long dialogue between the master and his slave, known as the *Dialogue of Pessimism*.³⁵

This composition opens with the master's calling the attention of his slave to what he is going to say. Next he announces his intention of doing something good and worth while. The slave supports the idea outright and encourages him by pointing to several other advantages that will accrue to him if he pursues his intended course. The master changes his mind and the slave does not hesitate to add many dark aspects attending the choice. In this fashion many proposals are suggested and the pros and cons are seriously weighed. They are discarded as not worth the trouble of man's endeavour. Here are some extracts from the *Dialogue*.³⁶

- "Servant, agree with me." "Yes, my lord, yes."
 "I will love a woman." "So love, my lord, so love.
 The man who loves a woman forgets want and misery."
 "No slave, I will not love a woman."
 "Love not, my lord, love not.
 Woman is a snare, a trap, a pitfall;
 Woman is a sharpened iron sword
 Which will cut a young man's neck."

The master wants to offer sacrifice but then changes his mind; The slave supports him:

- "No slave, I will not make a libation to my god!"
 "Make it not, my lord, make it not!"

Doing good and evil are both useless. There is nothing more left than to put an end to life, so the master says:

35. *ANET*, pp. 437 f.; *Supplement*, pp. 600 f. Lambert, *op. cit.*, pp. 139 - 49.

36. Jacobsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 231 - 33.

"Slave agree with me!" "Yes, my lord, yes!"

"Now then, what is good?"

To break my neck and thy neck,
to fall into the river – that is good!"

It was good as long as it happened to someone else. The man who discounts all interest in life wants to cling to it at least a few days longer. The master wants his slave to precede him! But the slave shrewdly points out that if life is not worth living, if everything is misery and vanity, what advantage would the master derive by prolonging life even for three days after his slave's death? The master persists in his suggestion:

"No slave, I kill only thee and let thee precede me!"

"And would my lord want to live (even) three days
after me?"

Thus the discourse comes to a gloomy end and arrives at the conclusion that life is miserable. It may be true that "the work has a humorous intent and is to be regarded as a satire. This is not, however, to deny that there is, underlying the humorous treatment, serious consideration of a philosophical problem, namely, 'What is the purpose of life'? ³⁷

At the end of our brief survey of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts dealing with the problem of suffering, it is clear that the writers were keenly aware of the fact of the experience of pain and even sought to account for its existence. Their answer is intimately bound up with their conception of the cosmic state and of the powers that rule the universe. In spite of their achievements in the field of culture and civilization they did not succeed in giving a satisfactory answer to the most vexing problem afflicting them. The problem of suffering can, in the final analysis, find an adequate answer only in the light of the mystery of the cross, and this was not yet known to the ancients.³⁸ The 'wisdom' literature of Egypt and Mesopotamia embodies sublime thoughts and profound observations, and also shows much affinity with the religious

37. Saggs, *op. cit.*, p. 416.

38. This remark is true of ancient Israel as well.

lyrics of ancient Israel,³⁹ but the writers had in no way come up to the spiritual *milieu* we come across in the OT. For it was not granted to the poets of Egypt, Sumer and Accad to know the will of the one God and to give themselves up to him wholeheartedly and unreservedly and therefore, though they could announce significant truths, they were never able to proclaim *the* truth.

Kotagiri-643217

Aloysius D'Souza

The Problem of Suffering: the Tradition of the Psalmists and the Sages

Of the various circles of believers in ancient Israel, it was the poets and the wise men who dwelt at length on the problem of suffering and made strenuous efforts to thrash it out. The purpose of this paper is to synthesize their views on the knottiest of questions that confront man here on earth, and to evaluate them in the light of the NT. The study will first deal with the Psalms and then pass on to a consideration of the tradition of the sages as represented particularly by the Book of Job.¹

39. That is, with the book of Job, with the laments of individuals who are in distress, etc.

1. The well-known theologies of the OT deal, in a more or less detailed fashion, with the views of the poets and sages regarding suffering; cf., for example, G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, I (Edinburgh, 1962), pp. 383-418. In spite of its age, still valuable is the study of E. Balla, "Das Problem des Leidens in der israelitisch-jüdischen Religion," *Eucharisterion. Studien zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments H. Gunkel...dargebracht*, I (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 36, Göttingen, 1923), pp. 214-60.

I

The Psalter includes a number of laments uttered either by the community at large when some calamity or other had befallen it or by individual believers who were in distress for various reasons. To understand these touching poems we must remember that for the ancient Israelites suffering meant the disturbance or destruction of the ideal state of existence, which they used to define with the help of the two technical terms *shālôm* and *yəshû'āh*, usually rendered as "peace" and "salvation". In its comprehensive sense *shālôm*² is something much more than what we understand by peace: the basic idea it conveys is that of wholesomeness, fulness, etc., implying too the individual's victory over his foes, success in every enterprise, and all manner of contentment, satisfaction, growth and development. As for *yəshû'āh*,³ this also is something eminently positive, and accentuates, above all, the idea of spaciousness with the consequent possibility that, the individual can grow and develop without being hindered or constrained by hostile forces. Victory, prosperity, security and contentment are essential features of salvation. There is, however, a clear distinction between these two concepts in the OT, for whereas the former stands for the lasting state of harmony and happiness, the latter lays stress on its actual possession and fruition here and now.

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2. It should be noted that the Arabic term *salām* that we so frequently use is the equivalent of this Hebrew noun. The root in question here occurs in Ugaritic, Accadian ("to be in good health, in harmony"), Phoenician ("to be complete"), Arabic ("to be intact, to be in good health") etc. For a discussion, cf. J. Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, I-II (Copenhagen, 1953), pp. 311-16. As the antonym of *shālôm* there is the root *shābar* which implies an infringement of the totality that is peace, a breach of the normal state of existence and consequently a destruction of the ideal state of affairs.
 3. The base is *yāsha'* (= Arabic *wasi'a*, "to be capacious"); vide discussion in Pedersen, *op. cit.*, pp. 320-22. As the antonym of *yəshû'āh* there is *ṣārāh*, the state of narrowness, constriction, etc.

The individual believer as well as the community could be deprived of *shālôm* and *yāshû'āh*, of course, as a result of the working of several factors. In the case of pious man these were the fear of premature death and of molestation by foes. Like the other Semites of antiquity⁴ the Israelites used to personify death and represent it as a monster who went about like a hunter with ropes and snares (compare Ps. 18:5f. 116:3). Furthermore, adopting a Canaanite myth,⁵ they went to the extent of likening it to the thief who stealthily entered houses through apertures in the wall. Jeremiah says, "For death has come up through our windows" (9:21). This monster was an associate of Sheol⁶, the abode of the dead, so that the poets of Israel usually spoke of death and the throat of Sheol in the same breath (Hab. 2:5); they refer too to the portals of death (Ps. 9:14), the mouth of Sheol

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4. The Canaanites regarded death as a god. In the Ugaritic texts he appears with the name Môt (lit. "Death"). In Mesopotamian mythology Nergal was the god of death and pestilence and the archetype of the angel of death. He ruled Kigallu, the Accadian Sheol. Discussions are found in E. Ebeling, *Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier*, I (Berlin, 1931).
 5. According to Ugaritic text 51:V:125-127 and VI:7-9 the god Baal refuses to have 'a window in the house, a casemate within the palace',—for fear that Mot may enter through it and put him to death. The Accadians pictured Nergal (the personification of the hot summer sun that brought fever and epidemics) as wandering about at night armed with a sword and accompanied by horrible demons. He would strike his unerring blows on unconscious victims (cf. M. Jastrow, *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria* (Boston, 1898), p. 583).
 6. Detailed discussion in C. Barth, *Die Errettung vom Tode in den individuellen Klage- und Dankliedern* (Zollikon, 1948), pp. 76-91 (cf. diagram on p. 82). E. Dhorme, "L'idée de l'au-delà dans la religion hébraïque," *Recueil E. Dhorme* (Paris, 1950), pp. 644-70. The term Sheol always occurs as a proper name without the article, and though the meaning is clear, the etymology is uncertain. It is possible that it is cognate with Accadian *Shu'ara*, in which case it originally designated the abode of Tammuz in the netherworld.

(Ps. 141:7), its belly (Jon. 2:3), its pangs (Ps. 116:3), and its ropes (Ps. 18:6).

In this connection, it should be remembered that the Israelites admitted some sort of survival after death in Sheol, but they did not have any clear idea of the life of bliss and of retribution beyond the grave.⁷ Sheol was the place appointed for all the living (Job 30:23), the land from where return was impossible, "the land of gloom and deep darkness, the land of gloom and chaos, where light is as darkness" (Job 10:21 f.). The inmates of Sheol were called *rəfā'im*, 'shades, manes, weaklings' (Is. 14;9.26:14.19. Ps. 88:11 etc.), and Yahweh, even though he was present in this sombre region (Ps. 139:8. Job 26:6) and would even drag out the wicked who would be hiding there (Am. 9:2), had no care for its residents. He would never do any wonders for them (Ps. 88:10). The greatest misery of the shades was that they could never praise the Lord (Ps. 88:10-12) and hope for his 'faithfulness' (Is. 31:18); in other words, the dead were completely excluded from the sphere of God's salvific activities, and the greatest desire of pious folk in ancient Israel was to live as long as possible "in the land of the living" where they would be able to sing the divine praises (Is. 38:19f.).

Man is generally brought face to face with death through serious illness, and the people of Israel quite naturally used to personify this tribulation and depict it as the first-born of death (Job 18:13f.). Of course, they knew that natural causes could bring about infirmities,⁸ but from their point of view, most of the time, it was Yahweh who afflicted man with illness for some

7. We may note here in passing, that not all scholars will endorse the statement just made. It is beyond the purview of this modest study to expatiate on this point.

8. Thus Meribaal became lame because of a fall (2 Sam. 4:4). King Ahasyah became seriously ill after falling from a balcony (2 Kg. 1:2); the son of the Shunamite woman died of sunstroke (2 Kg. 3:18-20), and Tobit lost his sight when hot dung fell into his eyes (Tob. 2:10). In all these instances the causality of natural factors is evident, but there were also instances in which no apparent cause was at hand for an individual's loss of health.

sin or other he committed even unwittingly.⁹ This conviction stands in the rear of the sick man's request to God not to rebuke him in His anger (Ps. 6:2), and the whole argument of Job's friends rests upon this persuasion (cf. 11:13-16 etc.). When the sufferer feels that his distress is the punishment for his past sins, he may even make a general confession, and some of the formulas used on these occasions are preserved in the Psalter; e.g. "I confess my iniquity" (Ps. 38:19. Cf. 32:5. 41:5).¹⁰

The sick used to give concrete expression to the abnormality of their situation in several ways that may appear somewhat odd to moderns; thus Job, when struck with a loathsome ulcer "from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head," sat among ashes (Job 2:7 f.), and his friends, as they caught sight of him, raised their voices and wept, rent their garments, sprinkled dust upon their heads, sat on the ground and observed his sufferings in silence (Job 2:12f.). The Psalter contains numerous references to the ways in which sufferers in Israel used to accentuate the abnormality of their plight. They bowed down, mourned

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9. Thus he may smite a man (Ex. 12:12) and even attack him all of a sudden with the intention of putting him to death (Ex. 4:24); his hand may rest heavily upon man (1Sam. 5:6), or his word may bring about maladies (Ex. 4:6. Num. 12:9f.) Finally he may despatch his angel to do the work for him (2Sam. 24:16f. 2Kg. 19:35). We may note here that in Mesopotamia malicious demons were invariably held responsible for all ailments, and to counteract their nocivous causality there were many and varied forms of magic, spells, incantations, etc.
 10. According to Mesopotamian traditions too sin was one of the causes of sickness, and invalids were wont to ask the gods pardon for whatever sins they might have committed. The most remarkable confession of sin ever made by non-biblical man is no doubt the following one occurring in a Sumerian composition dealing with the innocent man's sufferings: "Never was a sinless child born to its mother" (*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament Supplement* [Princeton, 1968], p. 590, line 102). Compare the Israelite confession, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5).

the whole day (38: 6. 8) like the swallow or the crane or the dove (Is. 38: 14), forgot to eat (102: 4.), or ate dust and ashes and let their tears fall into the cup and get mixed with their drink (102:9). They fasted so rigorously that their knees became weak and their bodies emaciated (109:24).¹¹ In this miserable predicament the sick certainly sought the aid of physicians¹², but they also invariably turned to God for consolation, strength and deliverance.

We now come to the second tribulation of the pious man, viz. molestation by foes¹³, who are at times said to be more numerous than the hairs on one's head (69:5) and who are described with the help of a rich variety of expressions: the sufferer's enemies (3:8), his pursuers (7:2), those who rise up against him (59:2), those who wink the eye, those who hate without cause (35:19), evil men, violent men, arrogant men (140:2. 5), evil-doers (5:6), etc. Picturesque to the utmost are

11. Penitential rites were common among the Babylonians as well; cf. W. Schrank, *Babylonische Sühnriten besonders mit Rücksicht auf Priester und Büsser* (Leipziger semitische Studien, III/1, Leipzig, 1908, repr., 1968) passim. Israel as a nation too, when in distress, was wont to engage in the performance of unusual actions with a view to accentuating the abnormality of the prevalent situation.
12. There were indeed circles in Israel which viewed this practice askance and even disapproved of it as it, at least apparently, meant a failure to seek Yahweh (1Chr. 16:12). At times men used to consult pagan gods (2Kg. 1:2), but this practice was condemned by the champions of the true faith (2Kg. 1:3f.); Ex.15:26b preserves a brief utterance which originally was a polemic against this superstition (cf. J. Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr, dein Artzt, *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 82 [1957] cols. 809-26).
13. Several theories have been put forward regarding the identity of the individual's foes, a discussion of which cannot be attempted here. It is taken for granted that the enemies are men who are malevolent, well-to-do, and guilty of the sin of social injustice. The sufferers frequently designate themselves as the poor; this is again an expression that has been interpreted in different ways.

the descriptions of these enemies and their activities. They are an army surrounding the psalmist (3:7). They are numerous and are arrayed against him (55:19); they draw the sword and bend the bow to kill the godly (37:14); they hide nets to catch their unsuspecting victims (31:5); they dig pits and the poor believer stands in danger of falling into them at any moment (7:16); they ambush and murder the innocent; they lurk in secret like the lion and seize the poor (10:8f.); they gnash their teeth (33:16) and like the lion tear the pious man to pieces (7:3). The wicked think in their hearts that there is no God (10:4; 14:1); often they boast saying: "I shall not be disturbed..." (10:6); "God has forgotten..., he never sees" (10:11); "We are heroes with our tongue; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?" (12:4). They scoff at the believer who has put his trust in God: "He relied on the Lord; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, if he loves him." (22:9)

The foes give vent to their venom when the psalmist is ill by paying him a visit, obviously with wicked designs in their hearts (39:2f.). They say most maliciously: "A malignant disease¹⁴ fills his frame; now that he lies ill, he will not rise again." (41:9) At times they speculate on the time of the psalmist's death: "When will he die and his name perish" (41:6)? Enemies at times act as false witnesses (35:11). What is most painful to the pious believer is the awareness that these men who have once been the objects of his special affection now requite him with evil for good (33:11-14). The false witnesses cry out against the psalmist: "Aha, Aha! Our eyes have seen it." (35:21) And when they succeed in their machinations, they exclaim with malicious satisfaction: "Aha, we have our heart's satisfaction! We have swallowed him up!" (35:25) Finally they may utter against him all possible curses (109:6-19).

Our discussion so far, perhaps gives the reader a graphic idea of the sufferings of pious folk in ancient Israel as well as

14. Literally, "a thing of *b livya al*:" this Hebrew term, composed of *b li*, "not, without," and *ya al*, "worth, use, profit," means "base, worthless, good for nothing;" and when used concretely, it conveys too the meanings "base, worthless person, a man of ruin, a thing that causes ruin, hurt, destruction".

of their reaction *vis-à-vis* these sufferings. We now hasten to add that the nation of Israel as a whole used to experience the loss of *shālôm* and *yāshû'āh* as a result of drought in the land,¹⁵ insect pests,¹⁶ foreign invasion,¹⁷ and military disaster.¹⁸ The national laments preserved in the Psalter¹⁹ have all been occasioned by the threat to Israel's existence as a nation or by the defeat the army sustained in the battlefield. The defeat of the Chosen Nation's army was invariably attributed to Yahweh's own causality, that is, to his failure to lead the army (44:11. 60:12). To understand this we must remember that in ancient Israel wars were a religious affair,²⁰ part of the Chosen Nation's life in accordance with the covenant, and it was for this reason that the Ark of the Covenant, a veritable war-palladium, used to be carried to the scene of battle (1 Sam. 4:5). From such a time the army was being led by Yahweh who was renowned as a mighty warrior (Ps. 24:8). And the climax of His activity as the leader of Israel's army was the despatching of a mysterious, sudden and numinous terror or panic that confused the foe and brought about his ruin (Jos. 10:10; Jud. 4:15; 1 Sam. 7:10). But at times the Lord did not act, with the result the army of Israel was routed; and on these occasions "the hearts of the people melted and became like wax" (Jos. 7:5).

Let us now see how the people of Israel reacted when they were caught in the meshes of suffering. Convinced as they were that the ultimate source of this distress was Yahweh's own mysterious causality, they used to turn to him, pour out their heart's

15. Jer. 14 contains a detailed account of a drought and the ceremony of public mourning conducted by the people of Judah. The various occasions on which there took place public penance are listed in 1Kg. 8:31-53.
16. In Joel 1-2 there is a colourful description of the invasion of the land by locusts and the rite of mourning that took place in connection with it.
17. For a description, cf. 2Kg. 19.
18. Compare the accounts in Jos. 8 and Judg. 20-21.
19. They are Pss. 44,60,74,79,80,83,85,90,115,125,126,129 and 137; some of these psalms are connected with the Babylonian exile.
20. Using Moslem terminology we can say that for the Israelites wars were invariably a *jihād*.

prayer, lament before his face, and humbly wait for his salvific intervention on their behalf. The suppliant began his lament with an invocation to God, accompanied by bodily gestures, which naturally assumed various forms: "O God" (5:10), "O my God" (3:7), "My God, my God" (22:1),²¹ "O Yahweh" (3:1), "O Yahweh my God" (7:1), "O Yahweh God of hosts" (69:7), etc. From the laments of the community we may cite the following invocations which have special reference to the history of salvation: "O shepherd of Israel, . . . O guide of the flock of Joseph, you who sit upon the Kerubim" (80:2),²² etc. Through this invocation the believer entered into immediate communion with his God.

There now ensues an urgent prayer for Yahweh's intervention on behalf of the sufferer, and this request, the very kernal of laments, may assume various forms. Understandably enough, the imperative mood is quite frequent: "Give ear, give heed, hearken" (5:1 f.), "Lead me, be gracious to me, heal me" (6:2), "Turn, save my life, deliver me" (6:2), "Arise" (3:8), "Arise in your anger, awake" (7:7), "Make haste" (40:14), etc. The petition may be formulated negatively: "Do not tarry" (40:18), "Hide not yourself" (52:2), "Hide not your face from me" (27:9), "Turn not away your servant" (27:9), "Be not far from me," (22:12) "Rebuke me not in your anger, nor chasten me in your wrath," (6:1) etc. We come across too the volitive mood of the third person, particularly when there is question of the poet's foes: "O let the evil of the wicked come to an end" (7:9); "Let them be put to shame and dishonour. . . ! Let them be turned back and confounded. . ." (35:4-8); "Let not those rejoice over me who are wrongfully my foes. . ." (35:19) At times the prayer can refer to the pious folk in Israel and their reaction as they happen to witness Yahweh's benevolence towards the psalmist: "Let those who desire my vindication shout for joy and be glad, and say ever more, 'Great is the Lord who delights in the welfare of his servant!'" (35:27)

21. On the meaning of "my God," cf. O. Eissfeldt, "Mein Gott im Alten Testament," *Kleine Schriften*, III (Tübingen, 1966), pp. 35-47.

22. Cf. Eissfeldt, "Jahwe Sebaot," *op. cit.*, pp. 103-23 (cf. pp. 116-19).

Lastly there is the volitive mood of the first person, which, however, is something not quite frequent: "Let me never be put to shame" (31:2. 18. 71:1). Instead of addressing a request to God formulated in the volitive mood, the sufferer may simply affirm the fact that he is having recourse to God: "I cry aloud to God," (77:1), "In you do I take refuge" (7:2) etc.

In the laments of the community there is a predominance of the first person plural: "Our ears have heard, our fathers have declared to us" (44:2); "You have rejected us and broken our defences." (60:3). The congregation may at times introduce itself in the third person: "your people" (60:5), "those who hear you" (60:6), "your loved ones" (60:7), "the sheep of your pasture" (74:1), "your flock, your inheritance" (74:2), etc. The community will naturally pray with extreme importunity: "Awake;... Arise" (45:24); "Rouse your power, and come to save us" (80:3). The believers may also question their God: "Why are you asleep, O Lord?" (44:24) "Why do you hide your face, forgetting our woe and oppression?" (44:25) "Why draw back your hand and keep your right hand idle beneath your cloak?" (74:11) "How long...?" (74:10) The request is at times formulated negatively: "Give not to the vulture the life of your dove; be not for ever unmindful of the lives of your afflicted ones." (74:19) The following petitions have as their object the foe and the fate that should befall them. "Fill their faces with shame... Let them be put to shame and dismayed for ever; let them perish in disgrace." (83:16 f.)²³

The sufferers in Israel used to lament over their misfortunes without any inhibitions:²⁴ "I am poured out like water, and all

23. In this connection we wish to recall that the sufferers make use of curses; on their meaning and significance, cf. Luke, "Imprecations in the Psalms: their Positive Value", *Jeevadhara* 8, pp. 132-48.

24. This was a common custom among the Sumerians and the Accadians; cf. J. Luyten, "Het zelfbeklag in de Psalmen," *Ephemerides Theologica Lovanienses* 39 (1963) pp. 501-38 (cf. pp. 518-26). C. Westernmann, "Struktur und Geschichte der Klage im Alten Testament," *Forschung am Alten*

my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potshred, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws...' (22: 15f.). The lament can assume the form of a query: "How long, O Lord...?" (6:4) "How long will you hide your face from me? How long shall I harbour sorrow in my soul...? How long will my enemy triumph over me?" (13:2f.) The sufferers may, in the course of the lament, cite the words uttered by their foes: "God has forsaken him; pursue and seize him, for there is none to deliver him" (71:11). At times the words put into the mouth of the wicked are real blasphemies; "There is no God" (10:4. 14:1); "God... never sees" (10:11).

The community's laments over its misfortunes are sometimes vividly pictorial: the foes are roaring in the midst of Yahweh's holy place, they have set fire to the sanctuary, and have desecrated the place of his name; they are planning to put an end to the cult of Israel's God (74:4-8). The heathen have come into Yahweh's inheritance, have defiled his holy temple, and laid Jerusalem in ruins. They have given the bodies of God's holy ones as food to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and now their corpses are lying about unburied; the people of God have become a taunt to their neighbours (79: 1-4); they have been bowed to the dust and their bodies are cleaving the ground (44-26). It should be noted here that in the course of the lament the whole calamity may be attributed to Yahweh's own causality: "You have now cast us off and put us in disgrace, and you go not forth with our armies... You marked us out as sheep to be slaughtered: among the nations you scattered us. You sold your people for no great price; you made no profit from the sale of them." (44:10-15)

Testament (Theologische Bücherei 24, Munich, 1966), pp. 226 - 305 (cf. particularly pp. 291 - 95). Specialists have often pointed out the ideological affinity the personal laments of Israel have with the Tammuz liturgies, i. e., poetical creations dealing with the sufferings and death of Tammuz, the youthful god of life; as this is a very complicated problem, it is not possible to discuss it here (cf. Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite. Aspects of Faith, Myth, and Ritual in Ancient Sumer* [Bloomington, 1969], pp. 107 - 33).

The suppliants give expression to their confidence and trust in their God,²⁵ and they also enumerate various²⁶ motives in order to move Him all the more forcefully to action on their behalf. As far as the sick are concerned, the most potent motive for divine intervention is the fact that in Sheol they will not be able to sing the divine praises: "For among the dead no-one remembers you: in the nether world who gives you thanks?" (6:6) "What gain would there be... from our going down into the grave? Would dust give thanks or proclaim your faithfulness?" (30:10) The highest motive the community, in its distress, can think of is Yahweh's glory: "Help us... because of the glory of your name, deliver us ... for your name's sake" (79:9).

Very often, after the bitter lament, there takes place a sudden and unexpected change of the psalmist's mood and tone. The people now express the certainty that their prayer will be heard, or even that it has already been heard and that they have been delivered from distress. As an example there is Ps. 28. The author who is surrounded by many foes prays to God for deliverance, but adds soon after. "Blessed be the Lord, for he has heard the voice of my supplication"(v. 6). How are we to account for this sudden change? In an interesting study W. Beyerlin has argued that in ancient Israel there was a special genre known as *tôdâh*²⁶ which had its setting in the liturgical or cultic functions connected with the sufferer's lament, and which, by praising Yahweh for the wonder he would be accomplishing on the psalmist's behalf, tended to actualize the experience of salvation.²⁷ Most exegetes, however, think that there took place, after the sufferer's prayer and lament, an intervention by a sacred person who, in his capacity as God's spokesman, assured the believer

25. Cf. J. Begrich, "Die Vertrauensäusserungen im israelitischen Klagelied des Einzelnen und in seinem babylonischen Gegenstück," *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (Theologische Bücherei 21, Munich, 1964), pp. 168-215.

26. This is a Hebrew word that means both "song of thanksgiving" and "thanksgiving sacrifice."

27. Cf. his study, "Die tôdâ als Heilsvergegenwärtigung in den Klageliern des Einzelnen," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 79 (1967) pp. 208-24.

of divine help.²⁸ This intervention, not being part of the psalm, is not recorded in most of the songs of lament, though unmistakable traces of it survive here and there in the Psalter. For example, the petition "Arise, O Lord" (3:8) expects an assurance—an oracle—with the promise, "I will now arise" (12:6); the plea, "Say to my soul, 'I am your salvation'" (35:3) presupposes the oracle, 'I am your salvation' (Is. 43:3). The most spectacular type of divine oracle is the one preserved in Ps. 60 which is a national lament (vv. 8–10). It comes to a close with the petition, "Answer us" (v. 7. Cf. 108:7), and the oracle that ensues is introduced by the formula, "The Lord spoke in his sanctuary". The content of the oracle is that the whole land of Israel and even the pagan countries belong to Yahweh, and that He has the right to divide the latter among the tribes of Israel. The words regarding the Gentile territories deserve to be specially noted: "Moab is my washbasin" (v. 10), i. e., the land of Moab which lies to the east on the shores of the Dead Sea is depicted as the basin in which the Lord washes his feet. "Upon Edom I cast my shoe": the Lord performs the symbolical action by which a person took possession of land, viz. he throws his sandal in the direction of Edom. All the area the sandal will fly over will belong to him. "Over Philistia I shout in triumph": he has conquered Philistia and now performs an action which will effectively make known the fact of his victory. When an oracle like the one in Ps. 60 failed to materialize, the believers quite naturally attributed it to Yahweh's wrath, and then repeated the rite of lament with the avowed purpose of appeasing his anger.

Personal laments as a rule come to a close with a vow or the promise to sing songs of thanksgiving, to offer sacrifices, or to do both; 54:6 is quite typical: "With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name..."

We bring our discussion of the tradition of Israel's poets regarding suffering to a close with the important observation that the psalmists were not interested in the theoretical aspects of the problem of pain, for they were men who actually experienced it.

28. Cf. Begrich, "Das priesterliche Heilsorakel," *op. cit.*, pp. 217–31.

It is obvious that a man who is seriously ill and shuddering at the prospect of death will never think of giving a theological explanation of his predicament. This remark, *mutatis mutandis*, remains true of the man who is being molested by foes, and also of the community which sees its very existence threatened by foreigners.²⁹ The theoretical side of the problem came to be studied by men who had made the pursuit of wisdom their life's goal, namely, the sages.

II

There was in ancient Israel, in addition to prophets and priests, a third group of men who acted as the spiritual guides of the people of God, namely, the wise men.³⁰ We may say that they constituted the intelligentsia in Israel and, alongside of the charismatic and institutional leaders of the community, represented another element in her existence, namely the pursuit of wis-

29. A problem that is of some moment for our understanding of the laments of the Psalter is their connection with the temple and its ritual. The nation as such, when in difficulty, assembled in the temple, offered sacrifices, etc., and a person who was being persecuted by his foes could easily take himself to the presence of his God, pour out his complaint, and wait for the divine oracle assuring him of deliverance. The difficulty is with regard to the sick who were not in a position to undertake a journey to the Holy City. Here several possibilities are to be distinguished. The invalid can send his representative who would lament on his behalf in the presence of Yahweh, or he might mourn and pray at home, write down his psalm, and despatch it to the temple to be deposited there *ex-voto*. This custom becomes quite understandable when we recall that letters to the gods were common among the Sumerians and Accadians, and according to Falkenstein this was the basic form of private prayer in ancient Sumer (cf. his paper, "Ein sumerischer Brief an den Mondgott," *Studia Biblica et Orientalia*, III, *Oriens Antiquus* [Analecta Orientalia 12, Rome, 1959], pp. 69-77 [cf. p. 69]; id., "Ein sumerischer 'Gottesbrief'," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 44 [1938, pp. 1-25; *Sumerische und Akkadische Hymnen und Gebete*, pp. 218f.).

30. On the sages and their cultivation of wisdom, cf. L. Koehler, *The Hebrew Man* (London, 1956), pp. 87-91.

dom. It is not necessary to dwell here upon their work. For the present purpose it is sufficient to note that one of the problems with which they were most concerned was retribution. They knew that Yahweh was righteous and would requite every man according to his deserts, but on the other hand, unaware as they were of the life of bliss after death, they visualized retribution as something terrestrial: wisdom would naturally lead man to happiness while folly would invariably land a man to misery; in other words, God would reward the righteous here on earth and also punish the wicked in this life. To prove this contention they used to make appeal to personal experience; here are the words of an elderly sage: "I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken..." (Ps. 37:25) The same wise man describes as follows the tragic fate of the wicked: "I have seen a wicked man overbearing, and towering like a cedar... And again I passed by, and, lo, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found." (vv. 35 f.) Here we have, then, a conception of retribution that is wholly this-worldly, without any trace of eschatology and the life of bliss beyond the grave.

It is in the light of the ideology just described that we have to view the book of Job which discusses the problem of suffering in a concrete, individual case. Job is a righteous man and yet he has to plumb the depths of suffering. How should the believer account for this fact of experience which gives the lie to the traditional teaching regarding retribution?

Job's three friends for whom retribution remains terrestrial, (cf. 4:7f. 8:3. 11:20. 15:17-25, etc.) are convinced that he is guilty, that he is suffering because of his sins, and they therefore exhort him to repent and thus regain his state of felicity (11:13-19). Job's answer to them is a persistent affirmation of his innocence, and to their contention that the wicked suffer, he opposes the fact of daily experience that they prosper and thrive (21:7-12). The sufferer must now seek a new solution, which he does: God has assigned to each man his lot without bothering to take into account his merits and demerits. With regard to himself, Job feels that God has decreed that his life should be one of unimaginable suffering (10:14ff.), and he must therefore suffer notwithstanding his innocence, God's decrees being immutable (23:13f.)

Job does not deny divine justice, rather he is sure of it and confidently affirms that if God were to judge his case, He would declare him innocent (9:32ff. 13:18. 23:2ff.), and his sole complaint is that God is slow in intervening on his behalf. For the divine intervention he most earnestly prays (7:17ff. 10:2. 22. 14:6), and he is sure that God will one day avenge him (19:23ff.).³¹

The result of the discussion between the hero and his friends is negative. Though Job has succeeded in refuting the view of his friends that suffering is the necessary sequel to sin, he has not shown how the doctrine of divine justice and the fact of his sufferings can be reconciled. The speeches of Elihu, who intervenes when the three friends fail to answer Job, do not cast any further light on the problem but rather cover the same ground though in a more rational and orderly fashion. He is wholly preoccupied with the defence of divine justice and he endeavours to show that God's justice is compatible with Job's suffering. If Job repents, he will be restored; otherwise he will perish (36:8-15).

Finally there are the speeches of Yahweh wherein divine wisdom and power are accentuated (38-1-30), and Job himself avows that they are beyond his comprehension (42: 1-6); but the problem of suffering is not touched upon, and the contributions of this section to the solution of the enigma is wholly negative and indirect. The import of the speech on Yahweh's wisdom is that the misfortunes of the innocent too, like the marvellous phenomena of nature, are part of the designs of divine providence which must ever remain a mystery to man, and when face to face with it, he must be resigned. The conclusion of the speech on God's power is that if the wicked are not punished in this life, it is not because of any impotence on the Lord's part (40-41).

The position of the book of Job on the problem of suffering may be summed up thus: 1) suffering is not necessarily the result of sin; 2) nor is it due to God's lack of power and

31. Job 19:23-27 represents the climax of the book. And though the text of the passage is hopelessly corrupt, the general sense is clear enough: Job will see God, and this expectation of his is subsequently fulfilled (42:5f.).

wisdom; 3) to the further query as to how to solve the riddle of suffering, the writer has no answer to give.³²

Now that we are at the end of this study we may summarize, as follows, the 'theology' of suffering in the traditions of Israel's poets and sages: 1) Suffering, in the final analysis, comes from God, and the believer who happens to fall a victim to it must turn to him with faith and confidence, for he is certainly able to deliver man from the iron grips of pain. The sufferer must wait in patience for God's intervention on his behalf³³. 2) Suffering can at times be a punishment due to sin, in which case the believer should confess his misdeed and obtain pardon of God. 3) However, there are numerous cases of the innocent suffering for no fault of theirs, and it is this fact that renders the problem of pain most poignant. Neither the poets nor the sages were able to give an adequate explanation of this fact of human experience, the reason for which is the simple truth that the mystery of the Cross was not yet revealed to them. All that we can say is that the psalmists and the wise men were groping their way to the foot of the Cross where God himself gave the final solution to the problem of suffering.

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32. Compare Job's statement, "shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil" (2:10)?
 33. This basic attitude, so often accentuated in the laments of the Bible, communicates to the religious lyric of ancient Israel an ever-fresh actuality, and renders it meaningful to the Christian believer. The people of God in the two Testaments, as they are caught up in the meshes of suffering, lament together and also pray together for deliverance. And when Jesus, dying on the Cross, recited the opening words of Ps. 22, he was associating himself with all the sufferers in the community of God's people, and with the divine intervention and using the words of the anonymous sufferer who composed Ps. 22. What he was praying for took place when he was raised from the dead. An awareness of this fact will certainly make our recitation of Israel's laments most fruitful.

The world-wide Mission of God's Humble Servant

Isaiah 42 : 1 - 4 presents a picture of Christ which was dear to the early Church. It also spells out a programme of life for us to follow. What is the meaning of this prophecy? What in it was so revolutionary that it could correctly characterize Christ's mission? What is the relevance of this text to the Church's task in India today?

It would appear that many translations and commentaries do an injustice to the passage in question, chiefly by lack of boldness in expressing 'the real issues involved. In our search for the true meaning of the passage we will therefore have to begin with a dynamic rendering of the original text before attempting an evaluation of what is at stake and a formulation of its equivalent message for us today.

Translation

Many Old Testament passages even when rendered into English, fail to convey a precise meaning to us. This is largely due to the fact that many of the translations still in vogue are excessively concerned with the vocabulary of the original Hebrew. As a result, they replace the Hebrew expressions by an anglicized biblical jargon that is almost as foreign as the original Hebrew itself. Good translation should aim at expressing the original text in present-day phrases and words, in the sense we understand them today. Only then will we truly have rendered the meaning of the text. Starting from this premise, Isaiah 42 : 1 - 4 is rendered more outspokenly than is normally done. After the text is given, the translation of individual words or expressions is briefly justified.

- 42: 1. "This person¹ is my servant.
 I uphold him.
 He is the one I have elected.²
 I³ am pleased with him.
 I have put⁴ my Spirit upon him.
 It is his task⁵ to establish a just way of life⁶
 for all mankind.⁷
2. He does not cry out,
 nor shout aloud.
 He does not make his voice heard in the street.
3. A damaged reed he does not break,
 nor quench a wavering flame.
 But⁸ he establishes a just way of life by truth.⁹

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1. lit.: "behold". Through this phrase the speaker (God) manifestly introduces a person. Therefore, we translate:
 This person is.
2. lit.: my chosen one.
3. lit.: 'my soul'.
4. lit.: 'I have given'.
5. This rendering brings out the meaning of the consecutive *waw* construction in the Hebrew.
6. lit.: "judgment" (Hebrew: *misphat*). The 'bringing of judgment' here does not restrict itself to the pronouncement of a verdict in a court case. What is meant is the more fundamental deed of establishing an order of well-regulated conduct such as Joshua established when he mediated the covenant (Jos 24:25). That this is the meaning of the expression here is abundantly clear from the explicit interpretation provided in Is 42:6-7.
7. lit.: "for the nations". In post-exilic Jewish thought this expression always stands for the non-Jewish rest of the world. It is equivalent to "all mankind".
8. The Hebrew language is poor in expressing relationships between successive sentences. The way the Hebrew words are arranged here (starting with 'in truth') implies contrast.
9. Normally translated as 'with faithfulness'. This is, indeed, a possible translation supported by the meaning of the word in other contexts and the possible relation to the attitude of

4. With unshakable and unflinching determination he will eventually¹⁰ constitute a just way of life on the earth.
Eventually¹¹ even the farthest lands¹² will live¹³ by his guidance.¹⁴

The new 'servant of Jahweh'

Is 42:1-4 is an oracle. Jahweh is speaking. He is introducing a person to us and asserting that this person fulfils an important mission. Commentators used to be divided into opposing camps on the question whether Jahweh's oracle refers to an individual person or to Israel as a nation. At present the opinions seem to converge on an intermediate position. Jahweh introduces an ideal person who was originally understood as representing the whole nation (the collective interpretation), but who came later to be understood more in terms of a future outstanding individual leader of supreme holiness (the messianic interpretation). For practical purposes we may call this new ideal person introduced by Jahweh 'the new Israelite.'

unwavering perseverance spoken of later. However, it seems more likely that the author wants to use the word rather in its original meaning of 'truth' (I Kgs 22:16; Jer 9:4 etc.). In establishing a just way of life God's servant will not rely on violence (vs. 2-3), but will rely on 'truth' (see also Is 48:1; Jer 4:2; Jdg 9:15-16; Ps 145:18 etc.).

10. Lit.: 'he will not shake or flinch until'. The Hebrew 'until' clause does not express temporal succession but the climax towards which the action is moving (see Gen 8:6-7; Is 46:4; 1 Mac 5:54; Ps 110:1).
11. The following sentence is still governed by the 'until' clause.
12. Lit.: 'the coast lands' or 'the islands'. It is a hyperbolic expression to stress universality (see Is 41:1, 5; 42:10, 12; 49:1 etc.).
13. Often translated as 'will wait'. The meaning is rather 'energetic striving for life' (see Job 6:11; 13:15).
14. The word *torah* does not mean 'law' in this context, but a 'priestly decision' such as was given when a case was referred to the Jerusalem court (see Dt 17:9-10; 24:8; Ez 22:26; Jer 18:18; Ex 18:16, 20).

A study of Deutero-Isaiah (Is 44-45) reveals to what kind of society this 'new Israelite' belonged. Small groups of faithful Jews had returned to Palestine from their lands of exile. Generally speaking they were poor, badly organized, disheartened and constantly harrassed by enemies. They had very little political security. Their temple lay in ruins and even after it had been restored lacked the lustre of Solomon's time. Material progress was hampered by frequent civil wars and heavy taxation of all income. From a religious point of view there was a good deal of uncertainty about the extent to which God's promises still held good. It is against this background that we should understand 'the new Israelite'. *He is a man of humble status, fighting the odds of adverse circumstances, but determined to be faithful to Jahweh.*

There is little room for boasting or triumph in such a picture. There is little left of the glamour of a Moses, the victorious conquests of a Joshua or the majestic splendour of Solomon's court. But here Jahweh's oracle makes its first decisive pronouncement. Jahweh adopts this 'new Israelite'. *He is chosen by Jahweh to be his special instrument of Salvation.* The title 'Jahweh's servant' had always been reserved for great leaders such as Moses (Dt 34:5; Jos 1:1-2; I Kgs 8:53, 56; II Kgs 21:8), Joshua (Jos 24:29, Jdg 2:8), David (Ps 89:3-20; II Sam 7:5; I Kgs 11:34) or the prophets in general (2 Kgs 17:13). Here Jahweh calls the new Israelite 'my servant'. By this title the new Israelite is raised to the status of a new Moses, a new Joshua and a new David. Moreover, the Jews were well aware that God made free use of His power to *elect* the instruments of salvation. In this way He had 'elected' Jacob rather than Esau (Dt 4:37; Mal 1:2), 'elected' the Levites from all the tribes (Dt 18:5; 21:5) and Jerusalem rather than any other city for His temple (I Kgs 8:44, 48 etc.). He 'elected' the kings as He pleased (Dt 17:15). The new Israelite also receives a similar 'election'. Jahweh fastens on him in His love. He gives his Spirit to him as he did to his chosen leaders of the past.

The unexpected task

Early Israelite theology was heavily self-centered. The emphasis fell on Jahweh's election of the nation to the exclusion of

other peoples (Ex 19:5,6; Dt 7:6), although Jahweh was considered in some way the God of all the nations, He was thought of as having singled out Israel for a specially close relationship (Dt 32: 8-9). Deutero-Isaiah revolutionizes this concept by asserting that God's salvific will *embraces all the nations of the world*. "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Is 52:10). "That my Salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Is 49:6). "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth (Is 45:22). "That men may know, from the rising of the sun unto the west, that there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other" (Is 45:6). In our oracle too, the stress is on the universal extent of the new Israelite's mission. He has to work 'for all mankind' (Is 42:1). His mission is not limited to Palestine, but extends to the whole world, even to the farthest lands (Is 42:4).

What message of salvation is it that the new Israelite has to carry to the world? Other oracles of Deutero-Isaiah leave no doubt *the religious content of the message*. The mission should lead all nations to acknowledge Jahweh as the only God. 'To Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear' (Is 45:23). The mission will have been completed when the nations of the earth come to Israel with the humble admission: 'God is with you only and there is no other, no God besides Him' (Is 45:14). This no doubt is the ultimate aim, the fulness of salvation, which will result from more and more non-Jewish nations giving up their superstitious and idolatrous practices and submitting whole-heartedly to Jahweh's covenant.

In the particular oracle we are discussing now (Is 42: 1-4), stress is not laid directly on this religious function. Rather it is stated most forcibly that the new Israelite has to bring to mankind 'a just way of life,' much in the same way as kings and political rulers are supposed to establish a realm of justice (see Jos 24:25; Ps 72:1-4; 101:1-8). Deutero-Isaiah himself interprets this future realm of justice to imply that the eyes that are blind will be opened, that prisoners will be brought out of jail: 'from the prison those who sit in darkness' (Is 42:7). All through his prophecies we find the stress on this *social dimension of the new servant's mission*. God is deeply concerned about the sub-human conditions of some people. 'When the poor and needy seek water,

and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them' (Is 41:17). 'This is a people robbed and plundered. They are all of them trapped in holes and hidden in prisons' (Is 42:22). With eyes of pity God looks down on the 'have-nots' who suffer in jail, or hunger and thirst, or are smitten by the scorching wind and the sun (Is 49:7-10). It is the task of his servant to establish a human way of life for all mankind.

At this point the traditional Israelite would expect a command from God to initiate a new world-wide holy war. He would expect a 'military conquest of the earth', much on the lines of the victorious occupation of Palestine in the past. The message of Deutero-Isaiah explicitly rejects such a concept. The new Israelite will have to achieve his mission, not by violence or domination, but *by persistent service and persuasion*. He is tender-hearted and meek. He does not crush, even if he could easily do so, but tries to win the hearts of men by truth (Is 42: 2-3). Although suffering is not mentioned directly in Is 42: 1-4, it is clearly implied. The real victory of Jahweh's new servant will not lie in political power or military triumphs, but in delivering mankind through vicarious suffering and humiliation undertaken in his mission (Is 52:13-53:12). This is an entirely new and profound understanding of the way in which God will work out salvation. To some extent Old Testament theology here reaches its climax. It prepares the way for the ever-surprising reality of Christ's victorious passion. It is an insight so precious that it could well form the foundation for the expression of Christ's own mission.

The way of Christian redemption

Is 42:1-4 became a basic text for the New Testament understanding of the redemption. In the oldest traditions *Jesus' baptism* and this oracle are inextricably interwoven. It is at His baptism that the Father presents Jesus as his new servant 'in whom My soul delights' (Mt 3:16-17; Mk 1:10-11; Lk 3:21-22). It was the coming down of the Spirit upon Jesus at His baptism that marked the beginning of His mission (see also Jn 1:32-33). In other Gospel texts as well; the evangelists frequently characterize Jesus' mission with a reference to the present one. Because Jesus is the new servant of Jahweh. He establishes His just way of life by truth (Is 42:3; Jn 8: 44-46). Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:1-4 in full (Mk

12: 181-21) to explain why Jesus proclaimed His message in a humble and peaceful manner (Mt 12: 15-17).

It is not difficult to see how *the image of this new servant of Jahweh* suited Jesus to perfection (Acts 3:13). Jesus had come to bring salvation to all mankind. His salvation embraced the whole man: it brought the good news not only of repentance and acceptance, to all men but also of liberation to prisoners, sight to the blind and help to the oppressed (Lk 4: 18-19). Jesus' way of redemption also was one of persuasion regarding truth, of meekness and gentleness, of vicarious suffering. Jesus was, in fact, the perfect realization of what God had in mind when He inspired Is 42: 1-4.

There is much matter for thought in Is 42: 1-4 regarding *the Church's mission in India today*. As Jahweh's servants we cannot doubt the universality of our mission. We are called to bring about the salvation of all mankind. But this salvation should include the whole man, and especially in the Indian situation of today, should perhaps begin with a determined effort to bring about 'a just way of life' for everyone. It should also achieve its end not by triumph or domination, but by suffering and truth. The assurance of this oracle will then also have a special meaning for us today. However insignificant and small the Church may be in India, she will 'eventually establish a just way of life on the earth'. Eventually even those now most removed from her influence will receive life under her guidance.

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Suffering in the Life and Teaching of Jesus

Jesus said to them: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"¹. These are the words of Jesus to the disciples going to Emmaus, disappointed and desperate at His crucifixion and death. Few characters of the Gospel are as much like us as these disciples. After every trial, after every cross we walk along this road of despair, the road where the pilgrims of Emmaus journeyed, sadness clouding our faces, broken and disillusioned. The words of Jesus to these disciples compel us to reflect on the meaning of evil – the meaning of suffering which is the lot of all human beings on earth. The following is an attempt to understand the meaning of suffering in the light of the life and teaching of Jesus.

Etymology: Along with *pathos*, *pathema*, *thlibo*, *thlipsis*, *lupe* etc., *pascho* is the term at hand when the Greek or Hellenistic world wants to express or discuss the problem of 'suffering'. In keeping with the wide range of *pathos* in the sense of suffering, *pascho* embraces the multiplicity of experiences which can overtake a man. It means basically to experience something 'which comes from without and which has to be suffered'².

In the New Testament *pascho* is found 40 times and most of the references are to the sufferings of Christ himself and to the sufferings of Christians for his sake. In the Gospels we find two kinds of reference to *pascho* as regards Christ, one to the 'death' of Jesus³ and the other to His sufferings in general, though not exclusive of death⁴. The uniqueness of the suffering of Christ

1. Lk 24:25-26.

2. Cf. W. Michaelis, art. on 'Pascho' in *TDNT*, Vol. V, p. 904.

3. Cf. Lk 22:15; 24:26, 46.

4. Cf. Mk 8:31 par Mt 16:21 and Lk 9:22; Mk 9:12 par. Mt 17:12; Lk 17:25.

is reflected in the fact that *pathein* occurs in the Gospel only in the sayings of Jesus relating to His own person. Neither the persecutions of the prophets⁵, the fate of John the Baptist⁶, nor the sufferings of the disciples⁷ are called *pathein*, though there may be agreement in respect of other terms such as *dioko*, *mastigoo*, *stauroo* etc⁸.

Suffering in the life of Jesus

When we speak of suffering in the life of Jesus, we naturally think of the 'passion' narrative. It is true that this gives full expression to the suffering of Jesus. However more than the 'passion' narrative itself, it is the gospel section of the three predictions of the passion and resurrection⁹ that really interprets the meaning of the passion for Jesus and his followers. 'This section is the key to the understanding of the passion, and Wellhausen goes so far as to say that in its loftiness of tone it surpasses the passion narrative itself'¹⁰. While the 'passion' narrative reports the events scene after scene without attempting to interpret its meaning or its relevance to Christian life, this section gives a theology of the Cross and of the suffering of Jesus, relating it to the suffering of the disciples. It is worth noting that out of the 13 usages of the word *pascho* or *pathein* in the Synoptic Gospels, 7 are in this section.

The way of the passion

Mk 8:27-10:52 presents Jesus and his disciples on the way to Jerusalem. The whole section is framed by statements referring explicitly to the fact of being "on the way". The phrase 'on the way' is repeated several times in the section¹¹. For Mk this journey, or this "being on the way", seems to have a theological

5. e.g. Mt 5:12 par; 23:37 par.

6. Mk 9:12f par.

7. e.g. Mk 8:34 ff par; Mt 10:17 ff par; 23:34 par.

8. Cf. Michaelis, art. cit, p. 916.

9. Mk 8:27-10:52 and par.

10. Cf. R.H. Lightfoot, *History and Interpretation in the Gospels*, London, 1935, p. 80.

11. Cf. Mk 8:27; 9:33f; 10:17, 32,46,52

significance¹² though the historical fact of a journey to Jerusalem is not thereby denied. E. Lohmeyer has characterized this section as "the way to the passion"¹³. Here we have the revelation of the mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus and its consequences for his disciples.

The very structure of the three 'passion' sayings in Mk is revealing in this respect. Mk follows the same sequence in all of them:

- presenting Jesus and the disciples "on the way"¹⁴
- the prophecy of his passion, death and resurrection¹⁵
- the incomprehension of the disciples¹⁶
- the teaching on discipleship¹⁷

This revelatory significance of the 'way' to Jerusalem is brought out clearly in Mk 10:32 f where it is explicitly stated to be the 'way' on which Jesus and his disciples go up to Jerusalem which is the place of suffering and death: "And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid." The mysteriousness and profound significance of the way to Jerusalem is brought out by the representation of Jesus as "walking ahead" and the others "following in amazement and fear".

Jesus' suffering: a divine necessity

"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected"¹⁸. The first passion prophecy in all the Synoptics speaks of a "must" (*dei*) of passion and resurrection. Lk uses "must" about the suffering of Jesus also in 17:25; 22:37; 24:7, 26:44.

12. Cf. J. Schreiber, *Theologie des Vertrauens*, Hamburg, 1967, p. 190.

13. Cf. *Das Evangelium des Markus*, Göttingen, 1963, p. 160.

14. Mk 8:27; 9:30 and 10:32.

15. Mk 8:31; 9:31 and 10:33 f.

16. Mk 8:32f; 9:32f; 10:35f

17. Mk 8:34f; 9:33f; 10:35f, 42f.

18. Mk 8:31

The verb *dei* or *deon estin* expresses a necessity, a 'must', which an event has, without, however, specifying the reason for it. Its specific meaning is to be inferred from the connection with the power which stands behind the necessity.

Luke's usage is important in this connection. Out of the 102 occurrences of *dei* or *deon esti* in the New Testament 41 are to be found in the Lucan writings, Luke is familiar with this term from his hellenistic background, and it fits his way of thought. Yet the alteration of his background results also in the alteration of his usage from the ordinary hellenistic kind. The term is often used as a general expression for the will of God, the statement with which it is linked thereby acquiring the significance of a rule of life¹⁹. Jesus sees His whole life and activity and passion under the will of God as comprehended in a *dei*. The *dei* which as an expression of the will of God is an expression of His saving will, reveals to man his state of loss and thus demands faith in God's act of salvation. 'Dei' as Luke conceives it, thus comprehends the whole of God's will for Christ and for man, and does not express a neutral necessity.

Dei is used by Dan 2:28 in an apocalyptic, eschatological context, to indicate God's plans for the last days and to qualify the events that must happen at the end. The same usage is taken up by the Gospels in apocalyptic eschatological contexts²⁰. *Dei* characterizes these events as standing under the will and plan of God. Therefore when the passion, death and resurrection of the Son of Man are qualified by this 'must', they are characterized as belonging to God's eschatological plan of salvation²¹. It emphasizes the correspondence to, and origin in, the salvific will of God, as revealed in the Scriptures. The 'must' of Mk 8:31 as regards the passion of Jesus is interpreted in Mk 9:12 by "as it is written of him"²². The passion of the Son of Man is not just the result of the historical development of the opposition and

19. Cf. Lk 15:32; 18:1; Acts 5:29; 20:35.

20. Cf. Mk 3:7f par; Mk 9:11 = Mt 17:10; Mk 13:10.

21. Cf. W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* Berlin, 1965, p. 169; K. H. Schelkle, *Die Passion Jesus Heidelberg*, 1949, p. 110.

22. Compare Lk 24:46 with 44f.

enmity of the Jewish leaders, but has its basis and origin in the saving will and plan of God. The same idea is expressed by the use of *mellei*, in the same 'passion' sayings of the Gospel, which signifies a future event that is certain and even necessary²³.

In accepting this necessity of suffering Jesus did not act under compulsion but accepted it with the spontaneity of love. The mystery of the passion is that Jesus as Son of God should take upon himself the burden of mankind. The atoning effect of Jesus' suffering is brought out very clearly in the New Testament²⁴. It rested upon his willingness as the sinless one to give his life for sinners²⁵ in perfect obedience to God's judgement²⁶. This free and loving acceptance of the cross by Jesus is indicated in Jn 19:17 where Jesus is said to have gone to Calvary "bearing his own cross". This was already announced in Jn 10:18 where he said that "he would lay down his own life" and that "no one would take it from him". Jesus shows that he could have resisted arrest by rendering his enemies powerless²⁷. He stood unafraid before Annas²⁸ and Pilate²⁹. Jesus realizes in himself also the typology of Isaac who carried the wood for his own sacrifice³⁰. In the first century A. D. Isaac was depicted as an adult who voluntarily accepted death.

The way of suffering: the way of God

The disciples represented by Peter do not understand and resist the suffering mission and destiny of the Messiah: "Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. But Jesus turning... rebuked Peter and said to him 'Get behind me satan, because the way you think is not God's way but man's.'" ³¹ Jesus' rebuke to Peter 'Get behind me satan' evokes his rebuke

23. Cf. Mt. 17:12,22; Lk 9:44; Mk 10:33.

24. Cf. Rom 3:25; Heb 9:15; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10; Rev 5:6.

25. Rom 5:6-8; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18; Mk 10:45.

26. Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8.

27. Jn 18:6 28. Jn 18:20-23. 29. 19:9-11.

30. Gen 22:6, Cf. J.E. Wood "Isaac Typology in the New Testament", *NTS* 14 (1967-68), 583-89.

31. Mk 8:32-33.

of the tempter in Mt 4:10 'Begone satan'³². One who tries to draw Jesus away from the path of obedience to God's will by proposing a false messianic role is equally condemned as the one who does it by obstructing his path of messianic suffering.

However the rebuke to Peter has some difference. Jesus does not say simply 'Begone satan', but 'Get behind me' (*Upage opiso mou*) which is the typical formula of the call of the disciples in Mk 1:17-20. Jesus himself makes use of the same phrase to refer to following him in the same context in Mk 8:34. Peter's objection to the suffering of the Messiah willed by God means that he has a merely human outlook on His suffering. Jesus invites the disciples to think differently and be converted to the divine outlook on suffering. It is an invitation to conversion of heart from human ways to divine ones. He invites the disciples to understand that the way of suffering is God's way both for the Messiah and for the disciples. Jesus is asking Peter to step back to the path of following him and this path has now been revealed to be the way of suffering, death and resurrection.

Jesus' suffering: redemptive

The doctrine of the redemptive value of Jesus' suffering and death is based mainly on the early Christian theology of the servant of Yahweh. The Jesus-servant connection was the theological perspective of Jesus himself as it is clearly evinced in His own prophecies of His approaching passion.

The 'servant's' divine mission involves suffering, as we see especially in the Fourth Song of Is 53: 3-12. He suffers in place of the many, to unite them with God. Absolutely unique in the history of Hebrew thought is this portrait of a man with a 'mission to suffer'. Many a prophet must suffer incidentally, in consequence of his function of bearing witness in favour of God against the world. But the 'servant' of Yahweh suffers as his very function.

32. Cf. O. Culmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, London, 1967, p. 122f.

33. Cf. I. de la Potterie, *Confessione Messianica di Pietro in Marco 8, 27-33* in: SanPietro, Atti della XIX Settimana Biblica, Brescia, 1967, p. 76.

All the three 'passion' sayings present Jesus as the Son of Man who had to go to Jerusalem and be handed over to the heathen and endure great suffering there at the hands of the elders, high priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised to life on the third day (34). An analysis of these 'passion' prophecies shows that they are replete with the influence of the Fourth Song of the suffering 'servant' of Yahweh, Isaiah 53. In both we are asked to contemplate a man who is handed over, must suffer much, is killed, yet attains his glory nonetheless.

The use of the words *paradidonai* (to hand over) and *polla pathein* (to suffer much) shows that it is not merely a question of general similarity but has a deeper theological connection.

In both texts 'hand over' carries a 'martyr-witness' connotation. The word was current in the contemporary Jewish martyr theology.³⁵ Besides, the same sense is indicated in the New Testament where it refers to the 'handing over' of Paul³⁶, John the Baptist³⁷, the apostles³⁸ and Jesus himself³⁹.

In both texts '*paradidomi*' connotes a handing over by God. In Isaiah the connection is explicit: '...the Lord saw fit to crush him with pain...' ⁴⁰. In the 'passion' prophecies it is implicit 'the Son of Man is going to be handed over to men'—clearly by someone other than men. The human agents such as Judas, Pilate, and the Jews, are presented as instruments in the hands of the One who really does the handing over.

Jesus sees his 'handing over' as the fulfilment of the Old Testament. In Mt 26:24 and Mk 14: 21 he says, 'as it is written

34. Cf. Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; Mt 16:21; 17:23; 20: 18-19; Lk 9: 22; 44; 18: 31-33.

35. Cf. B. Willaert, "Jesus as the suffering Servant" in *CNTS*, Minnesota, 1965, p. 274.

36. Acts 21: 2; 28:17.

37. Mt 4:12; Mk 1:14.

38. Mt 10:17.

39. Mk 3:19; 14:10; 15:1; 15:15 and parallels,

40. Is 53: 10

of him'. In Luke he says it is 'written by the prophets'⁴¹ and 'according to that which is determined'⁴² or 'must (*dei*) be delivered'⁴³, '*dei*' expressing a necessity derived from the will of God as predetermined in the Old Testament.

This conspectus of comparisons demonstrates that 'hand over' in the Synoptic prophecies is intended to convey, not mere matter-of-fact human activity, but a divine activity as predetermined in the Old Testament. And it has been shown, in the 'passion' prophecies, that there are strong indications that the source of 'hand over' is Isaiah 53.

The expression *pathein* (suffer) in the 'passion' prophecies also merits consideration. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus' 'suffering' usually denotes all the elements of his passion, crucifixion and death undifferentiated. But in the 'passion' prophecies *pathein* (to suffer) is listed in a chronological series of particular sufferings: "The Son of Man must 'suffer' much, and be rejected... and be killed and...rise again"⁴⁴. The reason seems to be that 'suffer much' was a standard expression in frequent use at the time of Jesus. 'suffer much' must have been a familiar formula derived from the 'suffering servant' song in Is. 53.

The above analysis shows that Jesus looked towards His passion very consciously as an integral part of His task as Son of Man. His suffering is that of the 'servant of Yahweh', a suffering for the sins of many, through which he must come into His glory.

The power of suffering: in love

How can this suffering and death benefit the many? What lies hidden here that can invest a death with the power of life? Our redemption is ultimately a mystery of God's salvific love. Only when we look upon the life of Jesus, including his suffering and death, as a concrete human expression of God's love, intended by God to heal the disobedience of man's sin with the obedience of Christ's love, do we come to understand the mystery behind the power of Christ's suffering.

41. Is 18:31. 42. 22:22. 43. 24:7. 44. Mk 8:31.

Only Life can wake us to life and only Love can wake us to love. God wished to express his love for man in human shape. He meant His love to find expression in the love of Jesus. Jesus obeyed. He poured out his own love in an obedience to his Father and a desire to serve his fellowmen, which went to the limit of generosity, synthesizing the whole meaning of his life on earth in the only gift of love that can make no reservations. No man has greater love than the Man that gives his life for his friends. So it is not the physical reality of the suffering and death as such, but it is the Love behind it that gives the suffering of Christ its redemptive power.

Suffering: cost of discipleship

Immediately following the pericope of the destiny of the Son of Man Mark places with profound theological insight a pericope of instruction on the radical requirements of the discipleship of Jesus together with its eschatological salvific effects. The disciple's lot is closely linked with that of the master. He is called upon to share both the suffering and the glory of the Master. This is true of all the 3 context of the 'passion' sayings of Jesus. Following the 'passion' saying in Mk 8:31 and in v. 34-35, Jesus says: 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel's will save it. In the second instance, Jesus says: 'If anyone would be first he must be last of all and servant of all'⁴⁵. In the third instance, Jesus asks his disciples to drink the cup that he drinks and to be baptized with the baptism with which he is baptized⁴⁶.

Discipleship and self denial

Jesus says that the disciple should '*deny himself*'. This Marcan phrase seems to be a Greek equivalent of the Aramaic expression 'hate one's own life' found in Lk 14:26 and Jn 12:25⁴⁷. In Mark's point of view it may be related to the reaction of Peter at the 'passion' saying of Jesus. It was prompted by a

45. Mk 9:35. 46. Mk 10:38

47. Cf. R. Fridrichsen, "Sich selbst verleugnen Mk 8, 34", *Conject. Neot.* 4 (1937), p. 3.

hidden egoism which shrinks from suffering and fears commitment to a suffering and dying Messiah.

Discipleship and carrying the cross

The disciple must walk on Jesus' way of the cross. The image brought to mind by the expression 'carry his cross', is that of the condemned person going to the place of execution, carrying the cross on which he is to die. It emphasizes the extreme humiliation and pain of the condemned person. It is an invitation to the disciples, to face martyrdom⁴⁸.

Loosing and saving life

The same idea is again expressed in Mk 8:35: 'For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.' What is demanded here of the disciples is the readiness to lose all, even life itself for the proclamation of the Gospel, which is Jesus. The conjunction 'for' which links v. 35 to v. 34 shows that the same thought is continued. Hence the meaning would be whoever refuses to deny himself and to take up his cross and to follow Jesus and thus tries to save his life will lose it eschatologically. The idea that radical renunciation is the way of the disciples to eschatological salvation is quite emphatic in Jesus' teaching.⁴⁹

A share in Jesus' cup and baptism

In Mk 10:35-40 Jesus invites James and John to share his cup and baptism. The metaphors, 'the cup that Jesus drinks' and 'the baptism with which he is baptized' are generally interpreted as referring to Jesus' passion and death. These expressions, being parallel, signify in general the same reality.

In the Gospel of Mark, apart from the literal use of the 'cup' in 7:4, 8 and¹ 9:41, and the evidently sacramental use in the context of the Last Supper in 14:23, the word appears only in two places: in the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane in 14:36 and in the saying of Jesus in 10:38 f.

48. Cf. R. Fridrichsen, art. cit., p. 8.

49. Cf. Mk 8:34, 38; 10:38; 1³9-13, Cf. A. George, "*Qua veut Sauver sa vie la perdra qui perd sa vie la sauvera*" Bib. Vie Chret, 83 (1968), pp. 11-24.

The use of the word 'cup' in Mk 14:36 is very revealing. The parallelism of this verse with v. 35 in the same chapter is significant for the understanding of its meaning:

v. 35 "he prayed that, if it were possible, the *hour* might pass from him".

v. 36 "he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this *cup* from me"

The 'hour' and the 'cup' are placed parallel. Both have the definite article. Mk 14:41 shows that this hour is the hour of the 'delivering up' of the Son of Man into the hands of sinners, and the hour is that of the fulfilment of the Scriptures⁵⁰. The prayer of Jesus in Jn 12:27 'Father save me from this hour' is also parallel to that in Mk 14:35. From these it is evident that the 'hour' in this context is the eschatological hour of the passion and death of Jesus. The parallelism of the 'cup' to the 'hour' shows that the 'cup' also has the same meaning. In Mk 14:36 the 'cup' means the whole destiny of Jesus that is imminent: His passion and death, as the climax of His existence and mission. It is something which fills Jesus with such fear and anguish that He prays to His Father insistently and movingly that it may be removed from Him.⁵¹ The 'cup' comes from God and means, in a sense, the divine judgement.⁵² The horror which Jesus experiences in drinking the cup is poignantly expressed in the scene in Gethsemane.⁵³ In spite of the horror and conflict, Jesus accepts the chalice in obedience to His Father's will: 'yet not what I will, but what you will'⁵⁴. The text does not explain why Jesus should drink the cup of judgement. It is the mystery of the passion and death of the beloved Son who gives his life as a redemptive service, 'as a ransom for many'⁵⁵, and 'pours out his blood for many'⁵⁶.

But the use of the present tense 'I drink', 'I am baptized' seems to imply that the reality of Jesus' cup is already present.

50. Cf. Mk 14:49; Mt 26:54-56

51. 14:36

52. Cf. L. Goppelt, art. *Poterion* in *TDNT* VI, p. 153

53. Mk 14:33, 34

54. Mk 14:36b.

55. Mk 10:45

56. Mk 14:24

This is especially suggested by contrast with the disciples who 'will drink' and who 'will be baptized'⁵⁷. Jesus is already undergoing his divine destiny in obedience! He is always on the way of His mission on the way of the passion⁵⁸.

The 'cup' which Jesus drinks, therefore, refers to the whole mystery of His destiny as the suffering Son of Man, a destiny willed by the Father. The parallelism to 'cup' hints that 'baptism' refers to the same reality as the 'cup': Jesus' destiny, especially that of suffering and death. The context of section 8:27-10:52 with its series of solemn and unambiguous predictions of passion and death, leaves no room for doubt about this meaning.

How can the disciples share in the 'cup' and 'baptism' of Jesus? The disciples shall share in the destiny of Jesus⁵⁹. It means preeminently a share in the self-sacrifice of Jesus for the redemption of many, which is concretely conceived as service of all⁶⁰.

The necessity of suffering

Suffering is the inescapable lot of Christians '..... In the world you have tribulation....'⁶¹. Suffering is unavoidable for the followers of Jesus because the Saviour's work runs counter to the aspirations of the world and its power: 'If the world hates you know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you'⁶². Public confession of Jesus will result in tribulation and martyrdom⁶³. It started with the passion of Christ and will continue until His *parousia*. Suffering on

57. Mk 10:39

58. Cf. E. Best, *The Temptation and the Passion*, Cambridge, 1965, pp. 152 f.

59. Cf. E. Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, Gottingen, 1967, p. 126.

60. Mk 10:45; cf. 9:35; 10:43 f.

61. Jn. 16:33

62. Jn 15:18-19

63. Cf. Mk 13:12-13 and par.

account of Jesus is a privilege and a sign of divine election⁶⁴ and therefore one has to rejoice over the suffering⁶⁵.

Why is it that it is God's will that the Messiah and his disciples should suffer? It can be explained only in the light of the eschatological nature of Christian life. In Christian thought, God's realm in heaven entirely conformed to God's holiness, and stood in the sharpest contrast to this age or world ruled by forces of evil and governed by their evil values and designs. One day God would judge this world and bring this age to an end, transforming whatever in it was capable of being transformed and transferring it to the conditions of His realm. But meanwhile, so long as this world lasts, anyone in it who represents God's realm and its values must look for misunderstanding and persecution from the evil powers and the human beings under their way. The true servant of God will not be disconcerted by such suffering, but will realize that in some mysterious way it is a means by which the redemptive purpose of God in this world is carried out⁶⁶.

Suffering a punishment for sin

In Gethsemane Jesus prayed: 'If it be possible, let this chalice pass from me'⁶⁷. Christ surpassingly resembles us in his distaste for suffering and death. Consider His use of the word 'scandal' in reacting to Peter's intimation that he could fulfil his mission and still escape the cross. That he called such a suggestion 'scandal' indicates that he had to make a strenuous effort, in order not to waver. His emotional outbreak at the tomb of Lazarus⁶⁸ and the encouragement he needed at the sight of His passion show how much he resembles us in these reactions. The judicial character of Christ's passion precludes the assumption that suffering is good or meaningful in itself⁶⁹.

64. Cf. Mt 5:11-12 = Lk 6:22-23

65. Cf. Mt 5:12; Jn 14:28; 16:20, 22

66. Cf. D. E. Nineham, *Saint Mark*, London, 1964

67. Mt. 26:39. 68. Jn 9:2-3.

69. Cf. O. A. Piper, "Suffering and Evil", in *IDB* Vol. IV, pp. 450-453.

Christ has revealed to us that suffering and death are punishment for sin. This does not mean that specific sufferings are the punishment for the personal sins of those who endure them and therefore proportioned to the malice of their sins. That is the over-simplified Judaic conception which Jesus expressly refuted⁷⁰. But the mass of the sufferings to which humanity is subject results from human transgressions. If it were not for revelation we would know nothing about this. Left to its own lights, our mind sees in suffering and death only the effects of innumerable causes interacting in this corruptible world.

Suffering: a sharing in the cross of Christ

If it is the sinful world that makes suffering our portion it is the grace of Christ that makes of it a participation in His chalice and in His cross. St Hilary interprets the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Olives in a surprising fashion: "When Jesus asks that the chalice may pass from Him, He does not say that it may pass by Him, but that others may share in that which passes on from Him to them, so that the sense is: 'As I am partaking of the chalice of the passion, so may others drink of it, with unfailing hope, with unflinching anguish, without fear of death.'"⁷¹. This interpretation, though apparently strange, contains a magnificent truth. It truly represents the thought of a Father who was very close to the age of martyrs. It refers to the chalice that Jesus passes from generation to generation, having won for all men the strength to drink from it, the chalice that He continues to pass on 'far from Him' until the end of time. It does not mean that Christ, in giving man a part of His Cross, sends him suffering from which he would otherwise be exempt. It means only that Christ transforms our suffering into a sharing in His chalice and in His cross.

Christianity is not a religion of suffering, as if it brought suffering to the world or even as if it invited us to see a positive value in suffering, something to be sought after and in which

70. Cf. LK 13:2-5; Jn 9:2-3.

71. Cf. Comm. sup. Matt., Cap. 31 n. 7 cited by St Thomas, *Summa Theologica* III a, q. 21, a. 4.

to take delight. However it is the only true religion of suffering, because it is the only religion that transforms it⁷².

Call to suffering: call to love

What is the meaning of the beatitude of the unfortunate? 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted'⁷³. Many Christians believe that suffering has a value in itself. But in that case Christ would have said 'Make one another suffer', rather than 'Love one another'.

What counts is love. Merit is never proportional to suffering. If merit were in proportion to deprivation we should have to take care not to love in order for it to remain 'meritorious'⁷⁴. On the contrary, the more you do your work with 'love' the more Christian value your life will have. Suffering does not necessarily lead to love, but love does lead, and that soundly, to suffering.

God is Love. There is therefore only one value, one valid reference: love. God sent His Son out of 'love' and in order to teach us 'love'. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son...'⁷⁵. It is the same call to love that is addressed to those who believe in Christ: 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'⁷⁶. Under earthly conditions, to 'love' is to 'suffer'. For to love is in fact to be raised above oneself, and towards another. And existence on earth is tied up to such a heaviness, to such an instinct of retirement into one's self, that this raising is a real suffering. When God who is 'Love' descended into human nature, love became 'suffering'. This is the mystery of the Incarnation and of Redemption through suffering. If in God, love is a joyful mutual gift, in man it is the renunciation of self-love.

There is no means of loving without beginning to suffer, without having to control oneself, to forgive, to be faithful, to be-

72. Cf. P. R. Regamey, *The Cross and the Christian*, London, 1955 p. 65.

73. Mt 5:4 74. Cf. L. Evely, *Suffering* (tr. by M.C. Thompson, London, 1967, p. 76.

75. Jn 3:16 76. Cf. Lk 9:23; Mt 16:24-25; Mk 8:34-35.

lieve beyond and in spite of appearances, to hope for everything, to wait for everything: '...Love believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...' ⁷⁷. To love is to tear oneself away from oneself in order to trust God and others.

The temptation of man is to settle down in the corner where he is left in peace, where he will suffer no longer, no longer hear any 'call to love'. This is sin and this is hell, namely, to have lost the inclination to love in order not to suffer any longer.

Jesus came to go about the earth, giving himself to everybody, letting everybody approach Him, absorb Him, devour Him. He was completely available to anybody. Jesus did not seek the Cross: 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me' ⁷⁸. 'My soul is very sorrowful even to death' ⁷⁹. But he has been faithful in all its consequences to the 'Yes' he came to pronounce to his 'call'. The cross of Christ is this fidelity and not an asceticism. "You did not want sacrifices or holocausts but you gave me a body. And I said: 'Here I am.' ⁸⁰. Christ became man in order to love as a man through suffering. Jesus on the cross does nothing more than in heaven: He loves.

It is this love that Christ communicates to the believers. Christ, become a 'life-giving spirit', through His resurrection, capable of incorporating in himself every creature. He gives man the capacity of loving like him. This is the grace of union with Christ and the call proposed to each man, which works in him to lead him to love, to suffer, to detach himself, to entrust himself. It is this Christian call that is referred to by Peter in his First Epistle: 'Beloved, Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps' ⁸¹.

77. Cf. I Cor. 13:7 78. Mt 26:39.

79. Mt 26:38 Cf. J. Guillet, "Sorrowful unto death", *The Way*, 13 1973, pp. 41-48.

80. Cf. Heb. 10:5-7.

81. 1 Pet 2:21

Suffering: a means of communion and redemption

The root of suffering, the root of evil, is human imperfection. The creature as creature is imperfect, distinct from God Who alone is perfect. The infinite perfectibility in the creature corresponds to the infinite perfection in God. This natural imperfection becomes evil – true suffering – when man refuses to feed on the perfection of God, when he pretends to be self-sufficient⁸². Suffering can be explained because God made the creature creative. The freedom of man is genuine. The price of this freedom is pain and suffering⁸³.

Does God remain impassive or neutral before this use of freedom and its consequences? To imagine God in this way is to make oneself liable to no longer believing in Him; for how could one bear such a terrible image of love? God wanted man to be free. He allowed this dreadful risk because he felt powerful enough to compete with man in intervention, to compensate by his initiatives of love, all the evil that man could imagine. About the man born blind Jesus says that he was born thus so 'that the works of God might be made manifest in him'⁸⁴.

The misuse of freedom by Adam resulted in the Word becoming Flesh and dwelling among us. Suffering is the context of a dialogue between God and the creature, between good and evil at the end of which God will triumph. 'Be confident, I have overcome the world'⁸⁵. The cross is the conclusion of this dialogue between 'evil' and 'good', begun in the earthly paradise, a prodigious dialogue in which 'good' has the last word: Into your hands, O Lord...⁸⁶. The creature has returned to the creator⁸⁷.

It is in this light that we have to approach the problem of suffering and to understand the beatitudes of those who suffer. They are the true witnesses of the human condition. They pro-

82. Cf. L. Evelyn, *Suffering*, p. 89.

83. Cf. M. Craig, "Take up your cross", in *The Way*, 13 (1973), p. 22. 84. Cf. Jn 9:3.

85. Jn 16:33; Cf. also Lk 11:22. 86. Cf. Lk 23:46.

87. Cf. L. Evelyn, *Suffering* p. 91.

claim that the world is sick. Suffering reminds us that we are not made for this world of sin, that we are not of the world, that the world must be changed. Suffering transforms, matures and instructs. Suffering purges faith from self-love and love of the world⁸⁸. Suffering increases our capacity for love and understanding. All suffering gives us something in common with those who suffer. It is a power of communion.

Suffering is the school where people learn that they need God and one another. Only through suffering one knows how to accept the most beautiful thing in the world, which a human being can give to another, compassion, sharing, communion: 'I was hungry and you gave me food, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was in prison and you came to me...' ⁸⁹. This is the greatest kind of exchange, the most 'divine' relationship which can be established between two people.

The most precious image we have of God is that of a severely wounded person who is dying. God wants us to find Him again, and to venerate Him in the poor, the wounded, the insane. He established between Himself and us a mysterious solidarity which allows His sufferings to become ours, as ours were His. Thus suffering becomes sacred, when it is a suffering that saves, like that of Christ - a suffering born of love, full of love. Thus in Christ, and with Christ, suffering becomes a means of communion and a source of redemption.

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88. Cf. 2 Tim 1:8,12 89. Mt 25.

Suffering according to the Buddha's Teaching

The different schools of Indian thought, it is true, accentuate the fact of suffering and profess to be guides to final liberation, but no system has investigated the problem of pain with so much thoroughness as Buddhism.¹ As is well known, it was the en-

1. The bibliography on the life and teachings of the Buddha is truly vast. Only a few of the recent publications which are of exceptional value are mentioned and were written by men who were veritable masters in the field of Buddhist studies. P. V. Bapat (ed.), *2500 Years of Buddhism* (2nd ed., Delhi, 1964). A. Bareau, "Der indische Buddhismus", *Die Religionen Indiens* III (Die Religionen der Menschheit 13, Stuttgart, 1964), pp. 7-187. H. Bekh, *Buddha und seine Lehre* (4th ed., Stuttgart, 1958). R. de Berval (ed.), *Présence du Bouddhisme* (Saigon, 1959). A. Foucher, *Les vies antérieures du Bouddha d'après les textes et les monuments de l'Inde. Choix de contes* (Publications du Musée Guimet 61, Paris, 1955). E. Frauwallner, *Die Philosophie des Buddhismus* (Philosophische Studientexte, Texte der indischen Philosophie, 2, 3rd ed., Berlin, 1969). Id., *History of Indian Philosophy* I (Delhi, 1973), pp. 117-94. H. von Glasenapp, *Buddhism, a Non Theistic Religion* (London, 1970). G. Grimm, *The Doctrine of the Buddha* (Delhi, 1969). R. Grousset, *In the Footprints of the Buddha* (repr., London, 1970). H. Günther, *Der Buddha und seine Lehre nach der Überlieferung der Theravādins* (Zürich, 1956). M. Ladner, *Gotamo Buddha. Sein Werden, seine Lehre, seine Gemeinde. Dargestellt an Hand des Pali-Kanons* (Zürich, 1948). E. Lamotte, *Histoire du bouddhisme indien I. Des Origines à l'ère Śāka* (Bibliothèque du Muséon 43, repr., Louvain, 1967). H. Oldenberg, *Buddha. Sein Leben, Seine Lehre, seine Gemeinde* (13th ed. by H. von Glasenapp, Stuttgart, 1959). A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (Delhi, 1970). Some of the readers of *Jeevadara* may have heard about Tocharian, the Indo-European language known to us from

counter with human misery that made Prince Siddhārtha renounce the world and enter upon the arduous and painful quest which finally led him to the great awakening. The teaching of the Enlightened One² has an ever fresh interest, and there will be occasion here to point out that it has much in common with modern thought. An endeavour is made in this essay to give a succinct account of the Buddha's views as handed down to us in the Pāli scriptures.³ Pāli, the sacred language of Buddhism,

the Buddhist documents unearthed in Turfan (in Chinese Turkestan, in the Sinkiang region). A most surprising thing about Tocharian is that it has replaced some important Technical terms with indigenous expressions. These will be indicated (but not discussed in detail) in the course of our study.

2. The appellation Buddha needs some explanation. From the grammatical point of view it is a passive Participle formed from the root *budh-* (from Indo-European *bheudh-* by the addition of the suffix *-ta* [in the parent language *-to*]; compare, for example, Greek *paideu-to-s*, '[capable of being] educated,' and Latin *fac-tu-s* [with change of *-to* to *tu-*], 'made'). Now according to the rules of euphonic combination in Sanskrit the cluster *-dh + ta-* will yield *-ddha-*, and hence the form we are all acquainted with. Originally therefore Buddha was not a proper name, and it is for this reason that we add the definite article before it.
3. On Pāli literature, cf. S. C. Banerji, *Introduction to Pali Literature* (Calcutta, 1964). H. von Glasenapp, *Die Literaturen Indiens, von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Handbuch der Literaturgeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen, Stuttgart, 1961), pp. 155-73. M. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature II* (Calcutta, 1933). There is a comparative and historical grammar of Pāli available, M. Mayrhofer, *Handbuch des Pāli I-II* (Indogermanische Bibliothek. Erste Reihe: Lehr- und Handbücher, Heidelberg, 1951). On the problem of the original language of the Buddhist scriptures, cf. H. Lüders, *Beobachtungen über die Sprache des buddhistischen Urkanons*. Aus dem nachlass herausgegeben von E. Waldschmidt (Abhandlungen der deutschen Akademie der wissenschaften. Klasse für Sprachen, Literatur und Kunst 1952, No. 10, Berlin, 1954).

unfortunately remains unknown to the generality of Christian scholars in India, and in order to make the reader acquainted with it all technical terms will be cited first in Sanskrit and then in Pāli (within brackets).

I

According to tradition the authentic teaching of the Buddha is preserved in the *sūtra*- (*sutta*-)' literature. Though the collection of writings thus designated belong to different times, places and recensions, and is also representative of stages of development many years after the teacher's death, it preserves intact the original doctrine that he taught, but not his *ipsissima verba*, his very words. Heinrich Zimmer has rightly noted that "In Buddhist texts there is no word that can be traced with unquestionable authority to Gautama..."¹ This verdict of the great Indologist should not make us think that it is impossible to acquire an accurate knowledge of the master's teaching, for the Buddhist *sūtras* preserve, though under the cover of thick layers of later accretions, the Śākyamuni's original doctrine.

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4. The common term *sūtra* consists of the base *śū* (derived from II *śū* *śū*) and the suffix *-tra* which is used to form neuter substantives denoting a means or instrument; compare *vas-tra*-, "clothing", *śās-tra*-, "work of instruction", *śro-tra*-, "hearing", etc. Sanskrit *śū* corresponds to the identical element in Latin *sū-tor*, "shoemaker", *sū-ere*, "to be accustomed", *sū-bula*, "awl", to *hu* in Greek *hu-mên*, "thin skin" (with change of *s* to *h*), etc. In Indian tradition *sūtra* means thread, cord, measuring line, girdle, that which, like thread, runs through or holds together, rule, aphorism, and finally 'any work or manual consisting of strings of aphorisms or rules'. Among Buddhists *sūtra* has also the special meanings 'thread of tradition, doctrine, scientific system, rule', passage or chapter that purports to be a discourse of the Buddha'.
 5. *Philosophies of India* (Meridian Books, Cleveland, 1965), p. 466. Cf. too Bareau, *op. cit.*, p. 23, and Glasenapp, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

The Buddha's teaching, designated by tradition *darśana-* (*dassana-*)⁶, is simply called *dharma-* (*dhamma-*).⁷ This is an appellation that has a very rich variety of meanings: "ordinance, law, right, duty, righteousness, morality, virtue, good quality, (in psychology) nature, character, condition of being", and finally "truth, the truth, any religious doctrine, or philosophical system, especially the one taught by the Buddha". We can therefore define *dhamma-* as the genuine teaching of the Enlightened One, which is most succinctly summed up in the *cattāri-ārya-satyāni* (*cattāri-ariya-saccāni*), "the four noble truths"⁸, truths which have been detected by the great master at the moment of his enlightenment and which are concerned immediately and directly with the problem of pain. Let us now analyse these truths.

The first *satya-* is an affirmation of the fact of *duhkha-* (*dukkha-*) or suffering in the most comprehensive sense. The technical term *duhkha-* consists of the Indo-European (abbr. IE) prefix *dus-* which conveys such nuances as "unpleasant, difficult,

6. Morphologically *darśana-* is an action noun consisting of the suffix *-ana* (IE-*eno*) and the nominal element *darś-* (IE *derk-*, to be discussed in connection with *dr̥ṣṭi-*); in Pāli *dassana-* means not only "looking, seeing", but also "perception, intelligence, insight, religious persuasion".
7. On the term *dharma-*, cf. Luke, "Indian Theology: Some of its Prerequisites and Presuppositions", *The Living Word* 79 (1973) pp. 3-14. The two Tocharian dialects, conventionally known as A and B, attest two different forms as the equivalent of *dharma-*, namely, *mārkampal* (A) and *palaikne* (B), 'quality, attribute, (collectively) law' (compare *pele-*, "right mode, right, law").
8. Sanskrit *satya-* presupposes IE *snt-yo-* (vocalic *ṇ* yielding *-a-*), from the base *es-* (compare Latin *es-t*, Greek *es-ti*), "to be", as an adjective *satya-* means 'real, true, appropriate', and as a noun, "truth, truthfulness, fidelity". Tocharian A uses *kārme* which, as an indeclinable adjective, means "true", and as substantive, "truth" (compare too *krāmetsune*, truth, veracity"); the form in B is *emprem* which too is both a noun and an adjective.
9. Attested in Avestan, Gothic, Greek, etc.; compare Greek *dusmenos* (= Sanskrit *durmanas-*).

bad, evil, wicked", and the element *kha-*; the antonym of *dukkha-* is *sukha-*, "bliss, happiness, well-being", and the like. Indian grammarians have postulated a base *kha-*, but this is unfortunately too empirical an analysis of the technical term *dukkha-*, based upon superficial observation without any regard for scientific etymology. The word must be understood as a *prākṛt* formation from *dus+sthā*¹⁰, the latter element being a derivative of the IE root *stē-* which survives in Greek *hi-stē-mi*, Latin *stā-re*, etc.¹¹ The base conveys the idea of an enduring or lasting condition of things, a state of affairs that is durable. Etymologically, therefore, *dukkha-* denotes a state of affairs that is durable and unpleasant. The word is used in classical Sanskrit as an adjective, i. e., as the qualification of a condition or state, and hence the meanings "uneasy, unpleasant, uncomfortable, difficult", etc. As a noun it signifies "uneasiness, trouble, difficulty, pain, sorrow". All these meanings are attested in Buddhist writings as well, but in the enunciation of the first noble truth the word stands for "pain, sorrow, suffering".

In Pāli, we have a statement in the first *āryasatya* : *idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkham ariyasaccam: jāti pi dukkhā, jarā pi dukkhā, vyadhī pi dukkhā, maraṇam pi dukkham, appiyeḥi sampayogo dukkho piehi viṇṇayogo dukkho, yam pi iccham na labhati tam pi dukkham, saṃkhittena paṇe' upādanakkhandha pi dukkhā*.¹² (Now this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth regarding

10. M. Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen II* (Indogermanische Bibliothek, Zweite Reihe: Wörterbücher, Heidelberg, 1963), p. 48. In Tocharian A the term used is *klop*, "pain, suffering" (compare *klopaśu*, 'unlucky') and in B *lakle* (compare *lākle nākṣi*, 'destroying, killing pain'); the fact that both the dialects preserve *kleśa-* but not *dukkha-* is really surprising.

11. Cf. I. Burrow, *The Sanskrit Language* (London, 1965), p. 71.

12. The text here cited is from *Dhammacakkapavattana-suttam*; for a translation with copious notes, cf. T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist Suttas* (The Sacred books of the East II, Amer. repr., New York, 1969), pp. 148-50. To clarify the meaning of the text we add here the Sanskrit equivalents of

suffering: birth is painful, old age is painful, sickness is painful, death is painful, contact with the unpleasant is painful, separation from the pleasant is painful, not getting what one wishes is painful. In short the five aggregates that spring from attachment are painful.) The text is clear enough and needs no special comment.

The second noble truth deals with the *samudaya-* (Pāli, the same) or source of origin of suffering. The technical term here cited is a compound consisting of the prefix *sam-* (IE *som-/sem-*)¹³ and the noun form *udaya-* which is itself made up of the prefixal element *ud-* (*ut-*)¹⁴ and *aya-*, a nominal formation from the verb *i-* (cf. Latin *i-re*), 'to go'. *Samudaya* must then be rendered as 'coming up, emergence, origin'; it is the source whence arises *dukkha-* (*dukkha-*) in its manifold forms. Here is the Pāli text of the second noble truth: *idam kho pana bhikkhave dukkhasamudayam ariyasaccam: yāyaṃ taṇhā ponobbhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatrata-rābhinandinī, seyyath' idam: kānataṇhā bhavataṇhā vibhavataṇhā*.¹⁵ (Now, this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the cause of suffering: the craving that tends to rebirth, accompanied by pleasure and lust, seeking pleasure here and there, that is, the

the principal phrases: *apihi sampayogo* = *apriyasamyogam*, *piehi vippayogo* = *priyaviprayogam*, *samkkhittena* = *samkṣiptena*, and *pañc' upādānakkhandhā* = *pañcopādānaskandhā* (*upādāna-* "clinging to existence". *skandha*, "shoulder, aggregation, mass, multitude").

13. Compare Avestan *ham-* (with change of *s* to *h*), Lithuanian *sam-*, Old Prussian *san-*, Gothic *sam-* (in *sanjan*, "to please"), etc.; the form *sama-* (IE *somo-*) too is attested, and to it correspond Avestan *hama-*, Greek *homos* (with change of *s* to *h*), Gothic *sama-kuns* (= Sanskrit *sama-jātīya-*, and Greek *homo-gnious*), etc.
14. Cf. Avestan *us-*, *uz-*, Old Persian *us-*, Greek *hu* (in *hu bris*, "hybris", *hu-steros* = Sanskrit *uttara-*), Latin *us* (in *usque*), Old High German *ūz*, Modern German *aus*, etc.
15. The Pāli terms needing explanation are *ponobbhavikā* = *paunar-bhavikā-*, *nandirāgasahagatā* = *nandi* + *rāga* + *saha* + *gatā*, and *tatrata-rābhinandinī* = *tatra* + *tatra* + *abhinandinī-*; *abhinandinī-* means "finding joy (*nandi*)".

craving for passion, the craving for existence, and the craving for wealth).

The basic term in the text here cited is *tr̥ṣṇā-* (*taṇhā*), literally, 'thirst'. Considered etymologically, it is a derivative of the IE base *ter-s*¹⁶ which, through the process of vocalic mutation, gives rise to *tr̥-s*. The stem thus obtained will, under the influence of *r*, become *tr̥ṣ-* in Sanskrit, and to this is added the suffix *-na* which, because of the presence of *ṣ*, becomes *-ṇa*. It is worth noting that *tr̥ṣṇā* is etymologically related to English *thirst*, German *durst*, etc. Our term occurs a few times in the first Veda¹⁷, and is used by early writers not only in the literal sense but also metaphorically, i.e., in the sense of 'thirst for pleasure, desire, craving, yearning after'. Desire, then, no matter what its specific object, is the breeding ground of suffering, and since cravings most often remain unfulfilled, they can certainly cause great pain, disappointment, despair and the like. On this point the Buddha's views are virtually identical with those of Freud!

Desire is something highly complex as it can have as its object all the possible good things of this life, and the Buddha has tried to reduce this manifold variety to a limited number of categories by subsuming it under the three headings *kamatr̥ṣṇā* (*kamataṇhā*), *bhavatr̥ṣṇā* (*bhavataṇhā*) and *vibhavatr̥ṣṇā* (*vibhavataṇhā*). The three technical terms *kama-*, *bhava-* and *vibhava-* define in a comprehensive fashion, the whole world of objects which man's cravings tend after. These concepts are now briefly analysed.

To begin with, *kama-* is an action noun consisting of the suffix *-mo* (IE *-mo*) and the base *kā-* (IE *qa-*) which survives in Latin *carus*, 'dear', and Latvian *kamīt*, 'to hunger'. Here also

16. The base survives in Greek *tersomai*, 'to become dry', *tersainō*, 'to make dry', in Latin *torreō* (from *torseō*), 'to dry up, scorch, roast, parch', *terra* (from *tersa*), 'the dried up surface, the earth', Gothic *ga-thairsan*, 'dried up', etc.

17. Cf. H. Grassmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rigveda* 4th ed., Wiesbaden, 1964).

belong Avestan *kāmo-*, Old Persian *kāma-*, etc.¹⁸ The term has a rich variety of meanings: "Wish, desire, longing, love, affection, object of desire, of pleasure or of enjoyment, sensual and sexual love, enjoyment of this type of love". In Pāli too these meanings are clearly attested, so that we are justified in defining *kāmatanḥā-* as the craving for pleasure (specifically, sexual pleasure).

The second variety of desire is *bhava*, 'coming into existence, birth, production, origin, being, state of being, becoming, existence, life'. Etymologically considered, *bhava-* goes back to the verb *bhū-* which in its turn presupposes the IE base *bheu* surviving in Greek *phu-ō* 'to bring forth, produce, beget', *phū-sis*, 'nature', etc., in Latin *fū-i*, *fū-at*, Lithuanian *būti*, Old Slavic *byti*, etc. In Sanskrit *bhu-* means 'to become, come into being, happen, occur, exist, to be'; (compare *bhū-mi*, *bhu-man*, *bhu-ta*, *bhu-yas*, etc.) In Pāli *bhava* is 'coming into existence, birth, existence, any mode of existence', and later tradition also 'distinguishes *taṃ bhavā*, 'three modes of existence', namely, the sensual (in *kāmaloka*), the corporeal (in *rūpaloka*) and the formless existence (in *arūpaloka*)¹⁹. According to the Buddha's teaching *bhavataṇhā-* is basically man's desire for continuance in existence which for its part contributes towards the perpetuation of the cause-effect nexus or the principle of *karma*²⁰. By yearning after

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18. Compare *kāmyat-*, "desirable", *kāmaka-*, "lover, husband"; from Pāli we may cite *kāma-kāma-*, "having desires, desirous of lust", *kāmaguṇa-*, "passion, affection, object of senses, of passion", *kāmābhava* (with a lengthening for the sake of metre), "sensual existence in one of the eleven *kāmalokas*", etc.
 19. Strictly speaking this conception is not part of the Buddha's original teaching, and as such cannot be discussed here.
 20. To this technical term there correspond in Tocharian *lyalypu* (A), the passive participle of *lip-* (a base related to Latin *re-linguō*, Greek *leipō*, Sanskrit *ṛinakti*, etc.) used as substantive, "what is left behind, remnant, remainder", and *yāmor* (B) which too is a passive participle formed from the base *yam-*, "to do, make", but used as noun, "deed, action, activity" (compare the agent noun *yāmi*, "doer" and the expressions *kārtse-yāmi*, "bene-factor," and *yāmorūkte* = *karmadevata-*).

bhava man perpetuates the law of *karma*, whose outcome is the unending chain of births and rebirths.

The third type of thirst is *vibhava*, 'craving for possessions, wealth, prosperity'. The present technical term is a compound of *bhava* (just discussed) and the prefix *vi-* which conveys the idea of intensity (cf. *vi-jñāna-*, *vi-pula-*, *vi-dhi-*, etc.) as well as of separation, negation, opposition, etc (cf. *vi-pad*, *vi priya-*, *viphala*, etc.); therefore, *vibhava-* can mean "non-existence, negation of existence", and the sense accordingly will be 'inordinate desire for, craving after, the cessation of existence'.²¹ This preoccupation can, precisely because it is excessive and doomed to failure, give rise to suffering, but it is to be seriously doubted whether the Buddha ever had in mind this meaning. We therefore interpret *vibhava* as the abundance and possession of the good things of this life, prosperity material wealth, and doubtless, man's craving for them will land him in untold troubles.

The Buddhist conception of the three forms of 'thirst' agrees very well with the New Testament teaching regarding the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2: 16).²² It is proposed here that existence on earth is characterized by sinfulness which takes concrete form as unlawful gratification of the senses, sinful delights of the mind and empty trust in material possessions. Using traditional Buddhist vocabulary we can define these three lust as *kāmatanḥā-*, *bhavatanḥā-* and *vibhavanatanḥā-*.

The third noble truth affirms the possibility of overcoming, eliminating, transcending, suffering: *idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkhanirodham ariyasaccam: yo tassā yeva tanhāya asesaviraganirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo*.²³ (Now this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the elimination of suffering: elimination without any remainder of craving, the abandonment, the renunciation [of this craving], release [from it], non attachment [to it]). The significant term here is certainly

21. Cf. Rhys David, *op. cit.*, p. 148, n. 4 (p. 149).

22. Rhys Davids, *ibid.*

23. Pāli *asesa-* = Sanskrit *aśeṣa-*, *cāga-* = *tyāga-*, *paṭinissagga-* = *pratihnisarga-*, and *mutti-* = *mukti-*.

nirodha- which must be analysed as *ni + rodha-*, the latter being a nominal form derived from the base *rudh-* which in its turn goes back to IE *wer-* plus the extension *-dh-*²⁴, and means 'to hold back, check, hinder, suppress, destroy'; *Ni* (IE *ni-*, *nei-*) corresponds to *ne-* in English 'ne-ther, be-neath, in Greek *ne-ios*,' *ne-iatos*, Old High German *ni-dar*, etc. As a noun *nirodha-* (compare the form *nirodhana-*) means 'imprisonment, locking up, check, control, suppression, destruction'. In Buddhist tradition *nirodha-* is the total suppression or elimination of suffering through the annihilation of its cause, viz. desire in its manifold forms. From the Christian point of view the suppression of desire is utterly impossible, but what a person can and must do is to control it with the help of God's grace and keep it within the bounds of reason enlightened by faith.

The fourth noble truth points out the way, *pratipadā-* (*paṭipadā*), that leads to the elimination of pain. Sanskrit *prati-padā-* represents a combination of the preposition *prati-*²⁵ and the noun *padā*, 'foot'²⁶; compare the idiomatic expression in Sanskrit *pade pade*, "step by step". As a technical term *pratipadā* stands for the way to be walked, the path to be tread; it has too the meanings 'the right path, the right mode of conduct', and is synonymous with *mārga* (*magga*)²⁷, 'pathway'. The noble path leading to the suppression of suffering includes eight ele-

24. The base *wer-*, "to cover", survives in Latin *operiō* (from *op-wer-iō*), "to cover", Greek (Homeric) *erusthai*, "to protect, ward off". On the formation involved here, cf. A. Thumb-R. Hauschild, *Handbuch des Sanskrit II* (Indogermanische Bibliothek. Erste Reihe Lehr- und Handbücher, 3rd ed., Heidelberg, 1953), pp. 299,306.

25. The IE base is *preti* (cf. Latin *preti um*) as well as *proti* (cf. Greek *proti/pros*, in *pros-ody*, *pros-elyte*, *pros-thetic*, etc.).

26. Cf. Latin *pēs*, *pedis*, Greek *pous*, *podos*, Gothic *fōtus* (which survives in English as *foot*), etc.; the base in the parent language was *ped-/pod-* (with *e/o* alternation).

27. Be it noted that *mārga-* is a formation from *mṛga-*, "wild animal," and as such means "that which has to do with *mṛga-*, wild path, animal tract", and finally, "path, way in general".

ments; it is an eightfold path so that it is generally known as *aṣṭāṅga mārga-* (*aṭṭhaṅga magga-*). Here is the Pali text listing the eight constituents of the great way to *nirvāṇa-* (*nibbāna-*) *idam kho pana bhikkhave dukkhanirodhagaminī paṭipada ariyasaccam, ayaṃ eva ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo, seyyathī' idam: sammā-diṭṭhi sammāsankappo sammāvāzā sammākammanto sammājiṇo sammāvāyāmo sammāsaṭi sammāsamadhi*²⁸. (Now this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth regarding the way that leads to the elimination of suffering; this is the noble eightfold way, namely, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.) The second part of our study is devoted to an analysis of the constituents of the path leading to the great goal the Buddha points out to his followers.

II

The eight elements have the qualification *samyak-* (*samma-*). This adjective is derived from the combination of the prefix *sam-* (mentioned above in connection with *samudaya-*). The base *an-* ²⁹ and the element *y-* on the analogy of *praty-* ³⁰ and *sam-* ³¹ means 'going along with or together, turned toward or in one direction, combined, united'. Other nuances suggested by our term are 'completely, wholly, thoroughly, correctly, truly, in the right manner'. In compounds the form used is *samyak-* and in keeping with the basic sense here indicated, it is to be rendered 'right, proper, becoming, decent, correct'. In Pali *samyak-* appears as *samma-* ³² and has also gained the status of a technical term whose full implications will become clear from the ensuing discussions.

28. Pali *gāmiṇi-* (Sanskrit, "leading to" (from *gam-*, "to go").

29. From *in-* ³³ *in-*, surviving in Latin *propinquus*, *longinquus*, and Greek *apod-up-os* (with change of *qw* to *p*), etc.

30. This is in an indeclinable form; its final vowel is shortened before double consonants (e. g., *sammappaṇaṇa* = *samyak praṇaṇa*), and before vowels *-d-* is inserted as a glide (e. g., *samma-d-akkhāta-*, *samma-d-eva-*, etc.).

The first constituent of the true path is *samyagdr̥ṣṭi* (*sammādiṭṭhi*-), 'right view'. The verbal base *dr̥ṣ-*³¹, from which is derived the second element of the technical term here cited, denotes the action of seeing, and has also the meanings, 'to look into, examine, observe'. From the morphological point of view *dr̥ṣṭi*- is an action noun pointing to the action of looking into, seeing, and it denotes too the organ of sight or the eye, and finally what we call 'view, perspective', in the most comprehensive sense. In Buddhist tradition the word has, in addition to 'view' the meanings 'belief, doctrine, theory'. In Pāli texts *sammādiṭṭhi*, 'right doctrine, belief, orthodox teaching' occurs as the antonym of *micchādiṭṭhi*- (Sanskrit *mithyādr̥ṣṭi*-), "false, erroneous doctrine".

As the first element in the eightfold path leading to the suppression of pain, *dr̥ṣṭi*- may be defined as the right, proper perspective. The right view is something on which Christianity too insists. For the Christian there is a right way of looking at things and evaluating them: he has a peculiar point of view which has as its source his faith in the God and Father whom Christ has disclosed to him. Faith is a unique type of light which can and must transform the believer's view of things and give him a proper perspective.

Secondly there is *samyaksaṃkalpa* (*sammāsaṃkappa*), 'right intention'. As there is *sammāsaṃkappa* there is *micchasaṃkappa* (Sanskrit *mithyāsaṃkalpa*-), 'false intention. *saṃkalpa* (*saṃkappa*-) has, in Indian tradition, such meanings as 'will, thought, desire, aspiration', etc. The term must be analysed as *saṃ*- (the prefix already referred to) and the nominal element *kalpa*-, from the base *kalp-* (compare *kalp-ana*-, *kalp-ita*-, *vi kalp-ita*-, etc.) which goes back to the II. root *ṣqel* plus the extension *-p*-, i.e., (*s*) *qel* (*e*) *p*-³², "to set in order, arrange, to resolve, decide".

31. Formed from *derk*'- *dr̥k*'- (with the change of *k*' to ś); the base survives in Greek *derk o mai*, *de dork a* (= Sanskrit *dadarśa*), Gothic *ga tarh jan*, Old Irish *ad-con-dark*, etc.

32. Initial *s*- is put within brackets because it is mobile, in the sense that there are derivatives with and without it: e. g., Greek *skalops*, *skolops*, "pale, stake, thorn", Latin *scalpō*, *sculpō*, "to engrave, carve, scratch", Gothic *halbs* (whence English *half*, "divided, cut"), Old High German *scelifa* etc.

Accordingly *samkalpa-* (*saṃkappa*) is the right and earnest resolve to do the proper thing.

Modern thinkers speak of resolve, and Christianity too has always, in its teaching on the spiritual life, laid stress on the need to resolve to do better for the future. The believer turns away from the past with all its sinfulness, and relying exclusively upon the strength he derives from Christ's redemptive grace, resolves to lead a life worthy of his call.

The third element is *samyagvāk* (*saṃnāvācā*), 'right speech'. Sanskrit *vāk-* (from *vāk-s-*) ultimately goes back to the IE base *wegw-*, and presupposes, in the parent language, the nominal formation *wōqw-s-* (surviving in Latin *vōx*, 'speech, word, utterance')³³. As a member of the eightfold noble path *samyagvāk* signifies 'right speech, honest, appropriate speech', in opposition to false speech in its varied forms.

When we turn to the New Testament, we see that our Lord wanted the speech of his followers to be "Yes" and "No", and he even goes to the extent of condemning whatever is over and above this pithy formula as something coming from the evil one (Mt. 5: 37). The Epistle of James dwells upon the evils of the tongue (3: 6-12), and the Pauline writings too are explicit on the need for proper, right speech.

In the fourth place there is *samyakkarmanta* (*sammakam-manta*), 'right conduct'. Sanskrit *karmanta-* is a compound consisting of the two nouns *karma* and *anta*. The second term here *anta* (from IE *anti*) corresponds to Hittite *hant*³⁴, 'front, top', Latin *ante* and its derivatives, Greek *anti* *ex.*, Gothic *ende* (end) etc., and its sense accordingly is 'end, limit, border, conclusion, final point.' The common word *karma* (shortened from *karman-*)³⁵

33. The corresponding form in Greek is *epos*, from *Ēpos* (cf. epic.); Tocharian attests *wak*, *wek*, "voice".

34. The orthography has been simplified; observe that the Hittite form begins with a consonant (specifically a laryngeal).

35. On the formation, etc. cf. our discussions on *dharman-* in the article cited in n. 8 above.

is an action noun formed from the root *kar-*³⁶ by the addition of the suffix *-man* (IE *-men*), and meaning 'action, deed, work, sacred activity, cult', and in classical religio-philosophical tradition, 'the cause-effect nexus, the endless series of births and rebirths as a result of activity'.

The combination *karmānta* attests a variety of meanings, e. g., 'end, accomplishment of a work, the conclusion of a sacred action, work, business, management, tilled or cultivated ground', but as a technical term it denotes the accomplishment of that type of action which consists in right living or conduct. The Christian faith is quite emphatic on the need to do the right thing. Jesus teaches that only those who do the will of the Father in heaven will attain life everlasting (Mt. 7:21). He who hears Jesus's words and puts them into practice is like the wise man who built his house on solid rock (Mt. 7:24). According to St Paul man's justification has, as its counterpart, his sanctification. He has to live the life of the spirit, and this new life is defined by him as *pistis di'agapēs energoumenē*, (faith working through love) (Gal. 5: 6).

We now come to the fifth 'element, namely, *samyagājīva-* (*sammājīva-*), 'right living', i e., the right way of supporting life. The verbal base *ājīv-* means 'to live by, to subsist through', and is composed of the prefix *ā-*³⁷ and the root *jīv-* which goes back to IE *gwey-*, the base that survives in Latin *vivō*, in Greek *hois*, *zōn*³⁸, in English quick, etc. The element *ā-* has both the adnominal and adverbial senses. When prefixed to verbs particularly of motion and their derivatives, it means 'near, near to, towards'. As an adverbial element it implies such meanings as 'fully, really, indeed'. But with nouns the sense is 'to, near, towards'. The term *ājīve-* therefore means 'nearing towards life, striving to life, that for and by which one supports life', and the Buddha demands that it be *samyak-* (*sammā-*), 'right, proper'.

36 The original base is (*s*) *qwer-*, with *s* mobile which appears in the common forms *sam-skṛ-ta-*, *pari-ṣkṛ-ta-*, etc.

37. On this prefix, cf. Luke, "Ārādhana: A Lexicographical Study", *Jeevadhara* 14 pp. 173f.

38. The consonant *gw* becomes in Greek *b* as well as *z*.

The Bible always stresses man's obligation to support himself through honest labour. In fact, labour is a sacred duty imposed on him by the Creator. Such is the full significance of the command to subdue the whole of material creation (Gen. 1:28). This obligation is so great that anyone who fails to fulfil it has no right to eat (2 Thes. 3:10, 12).

Let us now pass on to the sixth member of the eightfold path, viz. *sanyagerāyama-* (*sāṃmarāyama-*), 'right exercise, practice'. The special term to be analysed here is *vi-ā-yāma*. The first two elements have been studied in the course of this essay, and as for *yāma-*, it is a derivative of *yam-* (IE *yem-*)³⁹, 'to hold, hold back, restrain, check'. It, therefore, means 'restraining, checking, holding back'. In Sanskrit *vṛyāyama-* has a rich variety of meanings: 'contest, strife, struggle, exertion, manly effort, athletic or gymnastic effort, exercise' (in the modern sense: e. g., with heavy clubs, by drawing the bow, etc.)⁴⁰. As the sixth element of the supreme *marga* (*magga*) the word under consideration means 'striving after the attainment of the goal of eliminating pain altogether', and the source of the idea involved here is doubtless athletics or gymnastics.

A similar tradition occurs in the New Testament which uses the verb *athēna* (2 Tim. 2:5. Cf. Heb. 10:32)⁴¹ while describing the Christian life, the life of the follower of Jesus here on earth, is a painful athletic contest. St Paul pummels his body and brings it into subjection (1 Cor. 9:27)⁴². The imagery here is suggested by athletics.

39. This base survives in Latin *redimere*, 'to redeem' (etymologically, 'to unbind').

40. Compare *vṛyamaśāla-*, *vṛyamaśila-*, *vṛyamaśīla-*, *vṛyamaśīla-*, *vṛyamaśīla-*, etc.

41. Greek *athēna* (whence *athletics*!) is probably related to Sanskrit *vāyati*, 'to be tired, exhausted.'

42. The Greek verb underlying 'pummel' i.e., *hupōpiázō*, means 'to strike one under the eye' (*hupōpion*, 'the part of the face under the eye') so as to disable or humiliate a man during contests; metaphorically the verb means 'to annoy, wear out, mortify'.

The seventh stage of the road to the suppression of pain is *samyaksamṛti-* (*sammāsaṭi-*), 'right recollection'. Etymologically *smṛti-* consists of the suffix *-ti* and the nominal element *smṛ-*, from *smar-* ((*s*)*mer-*)⁴³, and generally means "recollection, remembrance, thoughtfulness, attention". Buddhist tradition speaks of *smṛtyupasthāna-* (*satyupatṭhana-*), 'meditation on the evils of the body, sensation, mind and existence'. But such is not the sense intended by the Buddha when he refers to the seventh branch of the eightfold path. *Samyaksamṛti* (*sammāsaṭi*) refers "to the constantly repeated phrase 'mindful and thoughtful' (*sato sampajāno*) and means that activity of the mind, the constant presence of the mind, which is one of the duties most incumbent upon the good Buddhist".⁴⁴

In Christian tradition the word that describes best the type of activity involved here is recollection, by which is meant the practice of regulating our internal and external faculties and concentrating them on God who is the supreme object of all our strivings. Recollection implies the withdrawal of our senses and internal organs from all objects that cause dissipation and distraction, and keeping it fixed upon God. This is something that demands great effort and perseverance, for the general tendency of our faculties is to wander from one object to another. Concentration on the evils of the body, etc. is not, strictly speaking, consonant with the genuine Judaeo-Christian tradition, for Biblical revelation teaches that the human body is in itself something good. What is evil is human selfishness which remains to be eliminated.

The last element is *samyaksamādhi-* (*sammāsamādhi-*), "right meditation, contemplation"; it is the highest and last stage

43. Here again we have a base with moveable *s*; compare Greek *mermeros*, *mermerizō*, Latin *memor*, etc. Discussion in Luke, "The Biblical Idea of Marturia ('Witness', in J. Pathrapankal (ed.), *Service and Salvation* (Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 1973), pp. 113 f. (cf. too p. 113, nn. 2-3).

44. Rhys David, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

of *dhyaṇa-* (*jhāna-*)⁴⁵, 'abstract religious meditation', which, according to Buddhist tradition,⁴⁶ consists of four stages designated by the adjectives *prathama-* (*prathamā-*), *dvitiya-* (*dvitīya-*), *tritiya-* (*tritīya-*) and *caturtha-* (*caturthā-*). The latter is the state of supreme indifference, where there are no feelings, desires, inclinations and the like. It is the ecstasy of self-concentration which transcends all experience of pleasure and pain, and of desire which prompts man to action and thus perpetuates the cycle of rebirths.

Since *samādhi* is a term of capital importance in Indian tradition, a few words about its origin and meaning may be in place here. Etymologically it is made up of the preposition *sam-*, the prefix *-ā-* and the nominal element *dhi-*, from the verbal base *dhā*⁴⁷; *sam-ā-dhā* means "to place, put, hold, fix together", and it may have as object *manas*, *mati-*, *citta-*, *cetana* and even *ātman-*. With *manas* or *ātman* as object, the verb means 'to collect one's thoughts and concentrate one's mind in meditation', but when used without an object the sense is 'to be absorbed in meditation or prayer'. In Hindu tradition *samādhi* is profound or abstract meditation, with the cessation of reasoning, and according to the *Yogasūtras* it is the eighth and last stage of yoga, consisting in the most intense contemplation and implying the realization of the identity between subject and object. It is the highest form of union with the Absolute, after which there is not the least trace of the subject-object distinction.

45. The Tocharian dialects use *plyaskem* (A) and *ompalskonne* (B) respectively; the terms mean "meditation", and occur in conjunction with the verb *śim*, "to sit", and its supplementary form *līm-*; hence "to sit in meditation, to meditate".

46. On Buddhist mysticism, cf. Bureau, "La mystique bouddhiste", *La mystique et les mystiques* (Paris, 1965), pp. 669-725; cf. too P. Grison, "Le Bouddhisme comme expérience spirituelle", *Présence du Bouddhisme*, pp. 273-86.

47. From IE *dhē*, the base surviving in Greek *ti-thē-mi* (with change of *dh* to *th*), in Latin *fē-ci, con-dere* (with change of *dh* to *f* and *d*), Gothic *ga-dēths*, "deed", Old High German *tuon* (= Modern German *tun*), "to do", etc.

Christian spirituality has always taught that man can attain the higher stages of contemplation wherein the believer becomes united with God but without losing his identity: that of subject and object. Man and God remain, even in the highest type of mystical union, whole, entire and distinct, even though the believer may not always have, because of the impact of God's action on him, the awareness of his own selfhood. In this experience a distinction is to be made between the ontological and psychological levels. In the higher stages of union with God the subject and object retain their identity, but on the level of experience man may not be conscious of the infinite gulf that separates him from the One who is wholly the Other. We may, therefore, speak of a transcending of the subject-object polarization in a mystical union.

The Christian conception differs from its Buddhist counterpart, for according to the latter *samādhi*— in its highest form is the state resulting from the transcendence of opposites and of factors that necessarily imply the working of the law of *karma* and the consequent prolongation of the cycle of births and re-births. Christian tradition does not regard this transcendence as an end in itself, though it also teaches that the believer must detach himself from empirical experience in so far as it can become a hindrance to union with God. Christianity as a *mārga*—⁴⁸ has as its *terminus ad quem* union with God who is man's *Summum Bonum*.

III

For our study to be complete, it is necessary to dwell briefly on the Buddha's idea of *nirvāṇa* (*nibbana*-)⁴⁹, the final goal he proposes to all those who tread the noble path described above. From the grammatical point of view *nirvāṇa* is a compound, made

48. This concept is not derived from Buddhism but rather from the tradition of late Judaism as represented, for example, by the Qumran documents.

49. For a survey of the history of interpretation of this basic concept ever since the beginning of scientific studies, cf. G. K. Welbon, *The Buddhist Nirvana and its Western Interpreters* (Chicago, 1968).

up of the prefix *nis-* and the noun form *vāna*. Now according to the rules of euphonic combination in Sanskrit *nis-* becomes *nir-*, and under the influence of *r*, *vāna-* is changed to *vāṇa-*. And *vāṇa-* for its part is created from the base *vā-*, 'to blow', by the addition of the termination *-na*. Both the elements deserve to be closely scrutinized. Sanskrit *vā-* presupposes IE *wā-*, 'to blow, blow away, drift along', the base surviving in the common words *vāta* and *vāyu*. In Greek *aēsi* (from *a Fēsi* = Sanskrit *vāti-*), Latin *ventus*, Gothic *winds*, Old High German *wint*, English *wind*, etc.: compare too the verbs *waian* (Gothic), *wājan*, and *wāen* (Old High German), 'to blow', etc. The suffix *-na* (IE *-no*) serves to create verbal adjectives which are quite akin in meaning to the ones formed with the help of *-ta* (IE *-to*). It occurs very seldom with bases ending in short vowels but is quite frequent with the ones terminating in long vowels: e. g., *vi-drā-ṇa-*, *ni-drā-ṇa-*, *mlā-na-*, *ghrā-ṇa-*, *ati-hā-na*, etc.⁵¹ The forms thus created can function as both adjectives and substantives.

Reverting now to *nirvāṇa*, it may be said that as an adjective it means 'blown out, put out, extinguished (as a lamp or fire), set (as the sun), dead, deceased (i. e., having the fire of life extinguished)'. It is, however, as a noun that *nirvāṇa-* is most frequently used in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources, with the general meaning 'blowing out, extinction, cessation, extinction of the flame of life'. There is a line of tradition that visualizes the state of *nirvāṇa-* positively, i. e., 'final emancipation from matter and reunion with the supreme spirit or absolute, perfect calm, repose, happiness, highest bliss, beatitude'. Another strand of tradition understands it wholly negatively, i. e., as 'absolute extinction or annihilation of all desires and passions, and even of individual existence'. It has even been equated with *śunya* 'nothingness'⁵¹.

50. Cf. J. Wackernagel-A. Debrunner, *Altindische Grammatik* II/2 (Göttingen, 1954), § 560b (726).

51. This term literally means 'emptiness'. The Pāli equivalent is *sumata*, occurring in the sources as a qualification of *nibbana*, with the sense "destitute, deprived of all attributes and characteristics". The base in the parent language is *k'eu-*, 'to swell, to be empty'. Compare Armenian *sun*, "insignificant, very small"; Old Slavic *su-*, "vain, useless"; and Avestan *s-sūnō*, "without defect".

The exact sense the Buddha gave to the term under consideration is a moot question. Later Buddhist philosophy⁵² would have us believe that he meant absolute extinction, but this contention seems to be without any foundation in the earlier traditions of Buddhism. Without going into details, we say that the master understood by *nirvāṇa*—the state of absolute freedom from desire and the law of birth and rebirths, the state that transcends pleasure and pain, existence and non-existence, a state that is also over and above description and empirical analysis⁵³.

The Buddha's teaching on suffering, as has been pointed out at the outset, has an ever-fresh actuality, for the discovery that he made concerns man in the most intimate way possible. Calm reflection on our own personal experience will demonstrate beyond all doubt that desire in its manifold forms has caused us unimaginable suffering; in other words, we have, by our own activity, created for ourselves a hell here on earth! This is a point on which there is perfect convergence between the Buddhist and Judaeo-Christian traditions, but there is also a point on which they exhibit divergence.

Biblical tradition (and, before that, Sumero-Accadian tradition)⁵⁴ has always laid stress on the sufferings of the just man. Job, for example, was a paradigm of righteousness, but he had to undergo terrible sufferings. The Servant of Yahweh, though quite innocent, had to face sufferings *and death*, and finally in the New

52. For a succinct account, cf. A. B. Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon* (The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series 26, Varanasi, 1963).

53. On this particular aspect of Indian thought, cf. the pertinent remarks of R. Guénon, *East and West* (London, 1941), pp. 154–56 (on p. 154 the author refers to ‘the deep serenity which the Hindus find in pure intellectual contemplation’ which lies far beyond all contingencies).

54. Compare, in addition, to the Biblical studies included in this issue, the contribution of Aloysius D’Souza, ‘Suffering according to the Traditions of Egypt and Mesopotamia’.

Testament we see that Jesus had to empty to the very dregs the bitter cup of suffering. It is not correct to say that what we have in Judaeo-Christian tradition is an instance of the working of *karma* or of any such principle, for the Bible understands suffering in terms of the activity of a personal God who is the lord and master of history, and the New Testament has elucidated the meaning of suffering with the help of the term 'the Cross'. The idea of the Cross, needless to say, is alien to the perspectives of Buddhism.

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